



MET POLICE IN MELTDOWN

Racism and sexism endemic among cops >>Pages 4 & 5



UNIVERSITIES HIT AS THOUSANDS OF WORKERS WALK OUT

UCU union strike reports >>Page 20

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CRISIS IN UKRAINE



NO TO WAR

- Biden and West want to dominate eastern Europe
- Fight against all the imperialists and their system

LABOUR

Keir Starmer's latest week of right wing shame

LABOUR'S newest right wing answer to the Tories' crisis is posturing as "the true party of law and order"—turning anger away from the top and onto "crime".

Labour leader Keir Starmer has also given the Tories full support over Ukraine. And he sided with council bosses using scabs against striking workers.

>>Page 7

TORIES



Behind the many masks of Boris Johnson

AFTER TWO years as prime minister, Boris Johnson is in crisis.

He made it to the top job by sometimes presenting himself as different to the Tory norm. But behind it all, he still offered bosses a government for the ruling class. Now that looks shaky, he's in trouble.

>>Pages 14&15

ANTI-RACISM

Build these protests to beat back the Tories

ANTI-RACISTS, activists and trade unionists must be on the streets of London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 19 and 20 March.

The demonstrations are a vital way of fighting the Tories by showing the strength of the anti-racist movement.

>>Page 5



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Brainwashing'

Tory education secretary **Nadhim Zahawi** claims schools are brainwashing children to be critical of the government

'Yank out that hypodermic drip feed of Russian hydrocarbons that is keeping so many European economies going'

Boris Johnson goes green for war

'A whiff of Munich in the air'

Av-a-go defence secretary **Ben Wallace** gets overexcited about attacking anyone in war with Russia

'It's not the best time for us to offend our partners in the world, reminding them of this act which actually bought war'

Ukraine's ambassador to the Britains **Vadym Prystaiko** less convinced

'Residents only'

New rules on the use of the Downing Street gardens to cut down on the number of parties

'Brazen excuses were dreamed up'

Former Tory prime minister **John Major** on the current one



Accounts in a most peculiar way make charity look very different today

A FOUNDATION set up in the name of Captain Sir Tom Moore paid tens of thousands of pounds to companies run by the fundraiser's daughter and her husband.

One of the firms was registered only days before the charity was incorporated.

The Captain Tom Foundation was established in 2020 after the former army officer gained national attention with his pandemic fundraising.

It received more than £1 million in donations in its first year.

Accounts for the charity published recently reveal that £54,039 has been paid to two companies run by Captain Tom's daughter, Hannah Ingram-Moore, and her husband, Colin.

They also show that more money was spent on

HANNAH INGRAM-MOORE and Captain Tom

management costs than was given to charities.

The accounts, covering its first year from 5 May 2020 to 31 May 2021, show the foundation handed out four donations to charities worth £40,000 each. But it

spent £209,433 on support costs including £162,336 on "management".

The Charity Commission watchdog has a live regulatory compliance case—used to look into whether charities are acting in line with

legal requirements—on the foundation. Ingram-Moore was appointed a trustee of the charity on 1 February 2021 but resigned on 15 March, according to accounts.

Her husband, Colin, was appointed a trustee on the same date and remains in post on the board as the family's representative.

People can be paid for providing services to charities for which they serve as trustees.

But Charity Commission guidance states that "the total number of trustees who are either receiving payment or who are connected to someone receiving payment are in a minority".

For more than a month while Ms Ingram-Moore was a trustee, she and her husband made up half of the total trustees.

BUSINESSES SHOULD be allowed to privatise the moon and other parts of space according to a right wing think tank. The Adam Smith Institute says allowing property rights in space would boost the economy on Earth. It wants governments to divide the moon into parcels of land.

The countries would then rent out smaller plots to individuals or businesses. In her paper "Space Invaders: Property Rights on the Moon" economic research consultant Rebecca Lowe suggests this issue "can't and won't remain a debate for long".

Mooney maker?

THE HMRC tax office failed to collect £35 billion of taxes in 2019-20, according to the most recent data released last week, due to avoidance, evasion, and errors. That is £420 billion over the last 12 years.

Instead of providing resources to HMRC to go after those responsible, the government has cut funding and increased taxes for ordinary workers.

Britain props up Cameroon corruption

BRITISH diplomats believe Cameroon, a central African country with 27 million inhabitants, is run by just five men and that there is "extensive corruption."

President Biya has ruled for nearly 40 years and governs mostly from a luxury hotel in Switzerland. But Britain conducted six secret counter-terrorism operations in Cameroon last year, says the Declassified website.

This included British activity at a barracks in Cameroon's far north, Salak, where Amnesty International says terrorism suspects were tortured.

Britain is building training

Trained by Britain

villages in Salak for elite Cameroon units. Those forces are also accused of severe human rights abuses against an English-speaking "Ambazonian" movement.

In response to fresh demands for autonomy from the Francophone central government in 2017, Amnesty says more than 20 peaceful protesters were shot and over 500 arbitrarily detained.

Steel owners offer to pay tax bill—slowly

SANJEEV Gupta's GFG Alliance is accused in court documents of offering to pay only £500 a month towards an unpaid £20 million British tax bill.

Last week tax authorities filed petitions to wind up four of the industrialist's businesses owing outstanding tax payments of £26.4 million.

This could force Gupta's Liberty Steel subsidiary into insolvency and put more than 2,000 jobs at risk.

The HMRC tax office court filing said that in

a phone call in February, one of the entities, Speciality Steel UK (SSUK), which includes plants in Rotherham and Stocksbridge in Yorkshire, offered to pay £500 a month until July when it would know the outcome of a restructuring.

The tax authority said in the filing that given the £19.8 million owed by SSUK, HMRC "feels that £500 per month is not a reasonable offer".

GFG has been looking to find funding and repay creditors since the collapse of its main lender, Greensill Capital.

Have the cops been caught in a bank robbery?

AVON AND Somerset police force has been forced to refer itself for investigation. Evidence suggested it connived with Lloyds bank over potential fraud at the firm's recoveries unit in Bristol.

Documents appear to show that information about a confidential meeting between two senior police officers and alleged fraud victim



Kashif Shabir was passed to the bank without his knowledge.

The documents show that Lloyds executives wrote in an internal memo, "They are meeting with Mr Shabir on Monday to tell him that they intend to close their enquiry with no further action intended" before the meeting had taken place.

However, Shabir said that at the meeting, police told him that his evidence was "compelling" and fraud investigators were being instructed.

Avon and Somerset's police and crime commissioner Mark Shelford recently asked the force to look again at 92 similar allegations of fraud against Lloyds Recoveries.

We pay for failed energy companies

DETAILED FIGURES out last week showed that £68 of the average £693 energy price rise in April will be to cover customer credit balances that have been lost at failed energy companies.

Everyone, including those who lost cash, pays a levy to compensate for the failures of privatisation.

In a publicly-owned system, energy companies don't go bust.

People don't lose their credit balances, and 29 million homes do not need to pay £68.

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The imperial rivalries that push towards war

by YURI PRASAD

UKRAINE AND the surrounding states in Eastern Europe stood at the start of this week on the brink of a catastrophic war.

On one side, up to 130,000 Russian troops were massed across the border with Ukraine and on “exercise” in neighbouring Belarus.

On the other side, the West’s Nato military alliance positioned rapid response troops and battle groups in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland.

Heavy artillery, aircraft carriers, submarines and aircraft encircled the region.

A simple miscalculation by either side could lead to conflict, threatening the lives of millions of working class people. That’s why socialists oppose the war drive.

Boris Johnson signed up on Monday to be a loyal friend of the US war drive.

In a phone call to Joe Biden, Johnson said Britain was prepared to do everything it could to help.

Biden responded, “We’re not going anywhere without you pal.”

Lying behind the tensions is the Nato and European Union (EU) mission to expand their control to include all the European states bordering Russia.

If Ukraine were to join Nato, as its president hopes, it would be a major prize for the West.

Not only does the country occupy a strategically vital position, it also holds vast sources of mineral wealth including oil, gas and coal.

For his part, Putin and his gangster-led regime want to extend Russia’s “buffer zone” and prevent any further Western expansion.

Russia has repeatedly invaded neighbouring countries that have turned against it and has tried to discipline others by boosting breakaway

UKRAINIAN TANKS prepare for war in the northeastern Kharkiv region

movements. It has recently supported repressive regimes in Belarus and Kazakhstan, which faced revolts and strikes by ordinary people.

But Washington’s aims in Eastern Europe are more complex than just encircling Russia. Biden wants to use Nato to force all EU states into line with US policy.

For some time, these states have cultivated stronger economic links with Russia, mainly through gas imports.

That is the logic behind the £8 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline due

to bring Russian gas to Germany. Deals such as these have infuriated Washington. The US hopes leading a military response to Russia can force the EU to reassess.

“If Russia invades there will no longer be a Nord Stream 2,” Biden said during a joint press conference with the new German chancellor Olaf Scholz.

That means various EU nations’ bids to avert war with Russia are based almost exclusively on economic calculations, rather than a genuine desire for peace. The danger

of war over Ukraine illustrates the extent to which our leaders, east and west, are prepared to put economic and military power ahead of people’s lives.

Our criticism and our agitation must start with our own rulers and the US. But it extends to the capitalist system that generates war and militarism.

On other pages...

Don’t fall for Keir Starmer’s Stop the War smear >>>Page 6

Government’s thirst for war

KEEN TO get in on the action, some Tories talked up the prospect of a bloody war over Ukraine.

Defence secretary Ben Wallace’s “whiff of Munich” comment last weekend revealed a contempt for the current talks with Russia and a longing for shooting to break out.

Wallace and other cheerleaders for the US offensive see the crisis over Ukraine as a good way of diverting attention from the Tories’ crisis at home.

But others in the party are worried that a war could lead to

British troops being involved in an unpopular and expensive war.

MP Tom Tugendhat, chair of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, said Ukraine has a “significantly larger army” than Britain, and it is “increasingly capable” of “defending themselves”.

But rather than exploit Tory divisions, Labour leader Keir Starmer stood in front of a Union Jack and a Nato flag to say the Labour Party and the government “stand together against Russian aggression”.

Ben Wallace

Danger brews in eastern Ukraine

THE DANGER of an accidental trigger for war is particularly pronounced in the Crimea and Donbas regions that until recently formed part of Ukraine.

The Russian Federation seized the Crimea peninsula and its strategically vital Black Sea port of Sevastopol in 2014.

President Putin ordered an invasion after former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich was forced out by a rebellion that wanted to align the country with the European Union. Russian forces combined with local militias to seize important towns and have controlled them ever since. Since 2018, most of Crimea has been separated from Ukraine by a high-tech security fence.

But any territorial struggle on the Ukrainian border with Russia could easily ignite fighting over this vital area.

Last year a major stand-off between Russia and Ukraine was sparked by an unmarked

Russian ship in Crimea.

apparently unarmed ship, intercepted in the Sea of Azov, near Crimea.

Three years earlier Russian forces had opened fire on several Ukrainian naval vessels claimed to have invaded its territorial waters.

The Donbas region, which comprises a section of the eastern part of Ukraine’s long border with Russia, is also extremely unstable.

Ukrainian troops are arrayed along a 250-mile barricade of trenches and fortifications that regularly erupts in machine gun and artillery fire. They face off against the region’s separatists—Russian citizens backed by Russian guns.

Denis Pushilin, head of the breakaway Donetsk People’s Republic, said that a full-scale war could break out there at any time. He said his forces might need to turn to Moscow for support.

Some 15,000 people have been killed since 2014 in fighting between the separatists and the Ukrainian army, according to the Ukrainian government.

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Top police boss Dick axed but rotten cops still in force

by SIMON BASKETTER

BACK STORY

Metropolitan Police boss Cressida Dick has been forced to resign

- Pressure came from London mayor Sadiq Khan and home secretary Priti Patel
- But Dick should have resigned long ago over numerous scandals
- She will remain in the role while investigating Boris Johnson's parties
- Dick will leave behind a rotten police force built on oppression and corruption

THE RESIGNATION of Cressida Dick as boss of the Metropolitan Police is a reflection of a deepening crisis within the establishment.

Dick's resignation leaves a vacuum at the top of Britain's biggest police force. The organisation has reeled from self-inflicted crisis after crisis with a recent series of misconduct affairs.

Dick was appointed with great fanfare in 2017 as the first female leader of the Met. But her tenure was tainted by scandals.

In the past year alone she has been forced to reluctantly apologise for the failure to stop cop Wayne Couzens before he raped and murdered Sarah Everard.

Dick has also sort of apologised for police officers photographing the bodies of murdered sisters Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry and sharing the images on WhatsApp.

She failed to apologise after an independent panel found that the force was institutionally corrupt over the murder of Daniel Morgan. And she only half apologised over police failures that enabled serial killer Stephen Port to target young gay men.

This isn't incompetence—it is form.

Dick recovered from overseeing the slaying of the innocent Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005, only to rise through the ranks to the top job.

An inquiry in 2008 found the Met guilty of serious failings over the shooting. But Dick was exonerated.

Oversee

Bizarrely the Met police commissioner is expected to stay on for two months to oversee the investigation into Downing Street parties.

That will mean her replacement avoids having to stand over the whitewash—sorry, conclusion—which could decide Boris Johnson's fate as prime minister.

Now after quitting the top job, Dick could receive more than

£400,000. Dick is paid a salary of about £230,000 and signed up in September to serve a two-year extension to her original contract, which was due to expire this April.

She is entitled to be paid the full salary she would have received had she remained in post until the end of the contract in April 2024.

This would mirror Sir Ian Blair, who received a £300,000 payout after being forced out in disgrace as Met commissioner in 2008.

Dick will also have a pension pot in excess of £100,000 a year.

Arguments within the media are focussing on whether London mayor Sadiq Khan and home secretary Priti Patel were right or wrong to get rid of Dick. Most coverage ignores that both agreed to extend her contract. Partially, this was due to the lack of a successor.

Next in line could be “plain speaking” Manchester cop Stephen Watson who has complained that the cops are too “virtue signalling.”

Or “no nonsense” recently cleared of bullying Simon Byrne from Northern Ireland. Or it could be someone else, but who heads up the Met will matter little.

Each new head comes in after the previous one leaves under a cloud. They promise changes and don't deliver.

The real problem lies with the fact that an institutionally racist, sexist, homophobic and corrupt force remains. It's not just Dick that should go, but all cops.

SACKED—METROPOLITAN Police head Cressida Dick

Families of cops' victims are glad to finally see her gone

ALASTAIR MORGAN spent decades campaigning for justice for his brother Daniel, who was killed in a pub car park in Sydenham, south London, in the 1980s.

He said, “The first time I dealt with Cressida Dick was in 2012.

“Since then all she has done in relation to my family is just delay, obstruct and disappoint on a huge level.”

His response to her resignation was, “About time. Sadiq Khan could have fired her last year when the panel report into my brother's murder came out.

“She obstructed throughout the whole process.

“When I saw all the other scandals I thought about how I had been dealing with this for 35 years, so I know what they are like.

“This is an organisation that for years—decades—has been out of control.

“The main reason for that is the absolutely rotten oversight

De Menezes, Patricia Armani da Silva, said, “My feelings about this lady are very simple. I think she had to resign 16 years ago.

“She made a big mistake 16 years ago and she has carried on making mistakes. Absolutely she has to resign.”

Armani da Silva believes responsibility for her cousin's death lies with Dick “because she was in the controls, she was in the room, she sent the orders”.

“I think it is a disgrace,” she added. “She had many chances to send orders to stop him, to arrest him.”

Ricky Waumsley, whose partner Daniel Whitworth was murdered by Stephen Port, said it was “about time” and that he hoped more resignations would follow.

He said, “She had clung on to that position so tight when, all around her, the officers she was in charge of have been racist, homophobic and sexist.”



Mural of Jean Charles de Menezes

by the Home Office and other organisations—the complaints system, the political oversight.

“The whole show has been a mess for decades and this has led to the situation which we have now and, my God, it is going to be a job to tidy it up.”

Asked whether he had faith that change could come to the Met, Alistair said, “No, if you want an honest answer. No.”

The cousin of Jean Charles

IN BRIEF

It goes on...

JUST HALF of cops, and people who work for them, that committed gross misconduct were sacked.

This comes from a report by the police watchdog containing analysis over three years.

Out of 118 cases where the standards breach was proven by force disciplinary panels, only 55 led to sackings. The panels

were held after the useless Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) found a case to answer for misconduct.

Out of 418 cases where the IOPC found a case to answer for misconduct, force disciplinary panels agreed misconduct had taken place in 148 cases and gross misconduct in 118.

Of the employees proven to have

committed gross misconduct, 55 were sacked, 40 received written warnings, while four are recorded as “other”.

The rest retired or resigned before their misconduct panel was heard, the IOPC reports say.

Of the police employees where the lesser charge of misconduct was proven, 16 faced no further action.

...and on

THREE Metropolitan Police colleagues of the rapist killer Wayne Couzens could face charges for sharing racist and misogynistic

messages with him.

The CPS is considering action over discriminatory messages that were shared by serving officers with Couzens

before his attack on Sarah Everard last year. Detectives discovered material on a WhatsApp group on an old phone used by the killer.



Boris Johnson is rushing to save his own skin

Political desperation drives move to scrap Covid rules

THE TORIES have moved to end all Covid restrictions within weeks, including the legal requirement to self-isolate for those who have tested positive.

That means the virus will almost certainly be given new opportunities to spread.

In one of the most reckless moves during the pandemic, Boris Johnson used a parliamentary speech last week as part of the fight to save his political life.

Outlining a plan he called “living with Covid” Johnson also said the requirement to wear masks in crowded areas would be abolished.

Hard right Tories, who have long argued the needs of commerce trump public health, cheered

him to the rafters. But the mood among health scientists was very different.

“Taking away the obligation to self-isolate is the final and most powerful way of saying ‘It's all over’ and that infections don't matter,” said Stephen Reicher.

He is a professor of social psychology at St Andrews university and a member of a Sage subcommittee that advises the government.

Angry

And there was an angry response from unions.

Christina McAnea, head of Unison, said the move appeared premature given “rife” infections in schools and Britain-wide positive tests still

close to 50,000 a day. “Everybody wants

to get back to normal but Covid risks haven't disappeared,” she said. “This is going too far, way too soon.”

Rumours about the ending of free tests and of large-scale monitoring of the disease were abound after Johnson's speech.

With the British government effectively declaring Covid “over”, competitor countries were under pressure to do the same.

In Germany, which recorded an average of over 200,000 daily cases last week, regional states are lifting restrictions on shopping and eating out.

This high-risk strategy will now likely spread across Europe at enormous human cost.

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

BUILD PROTESTS TO BEAT BACK TORY RACISM

ANTI-RACISTS, activists and trade unionists must be on the streets of London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 19 and 20 March. Those demonstrations will be part of global mobilisations against racism.

In Britain protests called by Stand Up To Racism, supported by the TUC union federation, will focus their anger on the Tories, state racism and the threat from the far right.

It's an urgent moment. We can guarantee that Tories in trouble will redouble their efforts to fracture opposition by ratcheting up racism.

Home secretary Priti Patel's attacks on migrants and refugees with her abhorrent Nationality and Borders bill will rip up Britain's asylum system.

Forced

It will criminalise undocumented migrants forced to use dangerous methods to reach Britain. And citizenship could be stripped from those living here without warning.

Meanwhile attacks on Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in the policing and crime bill will criminalise the nomadic way of life, and greater

police powers will lead to a rise in racist policing.

The Tories plan more detention centres, to process asylum seekers in foreign countries, and more deportations and harsher treatment of people fleeing war, poverty and climate collapse.

Already new information this week showed that two-thirds of refugees arriving in Britain in small boats between January and June last year suffered from hypothermia.

Fighting against racism is an integral part of the struggles over rising prices, falling wages and the soaring cost of living.

We need a united working class to combat the government, not one set against itself by racist myths and divisions. And it's also true that a higher level of class

A higher level of class struggle can help to corrode the grip of racism

struggle can help to corrode the grip of racism.

As Gary Walker, a striker at Chep UK in Manchester rightly said last week, “I've got more in common with an African or an eastern European cleaner than someone from Eton.”

Mass movements can turn the tide on Patel's racist narrative.

The TUI airline was this week forced to stop operating deportation flights—showing how resistance can be powerful.

Streets

Taking to the streets on the 19 and 20 March is a vital way of fighting back against the Tories by showing the size and strength of the anti-racist movement.

That's important not just for anti-racism but also for every part of the resistance.

The Black Lives Matter movement, protests for Palestine and the climate, as well as after the murder of Sarah Everard show the impact mass movements can have.

And a bigger fightback can fuel the battle against the capitalist system that produces racism.

With a month to go, we ask all our readers to build the anti-racist demonstrations.

For details go to bit.ly/SUTR2022

BRITAIN—LEAVE CHAGOS NOW

BRTAIN IS always desperate to back the US—whether it's Ukraine, or in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

The government of Mauritius this week demanded Britain hand over the Chagos Islands. It comes more than 50 years after Britain expelled all the islands' residents, destroying their lives.

Since then, multiple court rulings and the United Nations have demanded Britain let the islanders return to their homes.

But Britain won't do it. It would rather the US had the islands—for a military base and torture camp.

That's why Britain's Labour government deported all the Chagossians—the “Tarzans and Man Fridays” as one Foreign Office official called them—in 1966.

The US had been eyeing up the islands for a military airbase since the early 1960s—but it wanted them “swept and sanitised” first. Britain was only too happy to help. So it rounded all the

Chagossians up and deported them to Mauritius, where they lived in poverty. Some died of suicide or illness, and some others moved to Britain and Seychelles.

Since then, the US has used the islands as an airbase, and as a place to rendition and torture prisoners in the war on terror. Britain insists the US can have the islands until at least 2036.

So, in the interests of US power, Britain refuses justice to the living victims of its crimes of Empire.

Breakfast in

RED

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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred

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Our new website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won't report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Don't fall for Starmer's Stop the War smear

KEIR STARMER has been riding high thanks to the shambles Boris Johnson has created. He has seized on the Ukraine crisis to prove to the British ruling class that as prime minister he would be a trustworthy defender of their interests.

This reassurance has taken a remarkable form—denouncing the Stop the War Coalition (StW) in the Guardian newspaper after a visit to the headquarters of the US-led Nato alliance in Brussels.

He wrote, “At best they are naive, at worst they actively give succour to authoritarian leaders who directly threaten democracies.”

The attack on StW has been widely interpreted as a way of further distancing Starmer from his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn remains in the wilderness, denied the Labour whip in Parliament and will likely be blocked from standing again as a Labour candidate.

Corbyn was chair of StW as was his chief of staff, Andrew Murray.

It's interesting that Starmer chose this way to demonstrate his loyalty to British imperialism and Nato. It confirms that the establishment drive to destroy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party was motivated chiefly by his anti-imperialism.

Starmer's attack on StW is shameful. The coalition was founded after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington to oppose the war drive by US president George W Bush and his chief ally, the New Labour prime minister Tony Blair.

StW played a crucial role in organising gigantic global protests against invading Iraq on 15 February 2003. It brought two million onto the streets of London that day. The New York Times commented, “There may still be two superpowers on the planet, the United States and world public opinion.”

Vindicated

The warnings that Corbyn among others made then have been amply vindicated. The Western occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq were both defeated by guerrilla resistance.

The so-called “War on Terror”, failed to destroy Al-Qaeda and bred more radical Islamist movements such as Isis, which is now spreading in Africa.

Iraq and Afghanistan were left devastated. Joe Biden's administration reacted to its humiliation when the Taliban seized Kabul last August by cutting off all aid to Afghanistan and seizing its central bank's assets.

Last week it announced it was splitting the money, amounting to over £5 billion, between the relatives of 9/11 victims and Afghan humanitarian aid. The biggest imperialist power in history is robbing the poorest of the poor.

Corbyn, Murray, and other StW leaders such as Lindsey German should be praised as prophets whom history has vindicated. Instead they are being denounced as apologists for Vladimir Putin. This is nonsense.

It's true that StW equivocated when Russia seized Crimea in 2014. But its opposition to Nato's aggressive stance over Ukraine is entirely justified. Putin may have initiated the crisis by massing troops on the border with Ukraine to advance his own imperialist interests. But it has been Washington and London who have been talking up the danger of war.

Volodymyr Zelensky, the pro-Western president of Ukraine complained, “The best friend for enemies is panic in our country, and all this information, which only helps panic, does not help us.”

Where Starmer is right is when he emphasises how involved the postwar Labour government under Clement Attlee was in creating Nato in 1949. They saw it as a way of propping up declining British and French imperialism by keeping US troops in Europe to counter the Soviet Union.

Starmer links “both the Ns—Nato and the NHS—as legacies of that transformational Labour government”. But Attlee made the first cuts to the health service in 1950 to help fund huge increases in military spending.

Blair was therefore very much in line with Labours tradition of defending Western imperialism. Starmer is returning to this. Corbyn is an honourable exception, closer to—though not actually embracing—the revolutionary internationalist position taken by Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg against the First World War.

Luxemburg's comrade Karl Liebknecht coined the slogan, “The main enemy is at home.” That should be our watchword today.

MORE THAN 500 protesters joined a rally against the Tories in Parliament Square last Saturday PICTURES: SOCIALIST WORKER

Demonstrations target Tories and the soaring cost of living

by NICK CLARK

SOME 30 protests took place across Britain on Saturday, on a day that should mark the beginning of a fightback over the cost of living crisis.

More than 500 people joined the rally in central London, promoted by the People's Assembly Against Austerity. People rallied outside parliament before marching up Whitehall to block the road outside Downing Street.

Many of the people there said they were already feeling the pressure of rising bills.

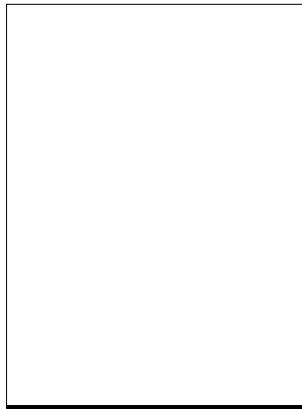
One protester, Sylvia, told Socialist Worker, “I work in hospitality and I wasn't paid very much last week. So I started coming into work early to get a meal. People around you will be affected by the rising cost of living even if you can't always see it.”

Fortunate

Even people slightly better off are beginning to feel the pressure.

Ell, another protester, said, “My energy bills are going up. Fortunately I'm still able to afford it, but I know that if I was less fortunate I wouldn't be able to continue living as I am.”

The protest also heard from low-paid workers on strike over pay and living conditions. Arshad and Arnold, two strikers from Barts health trust in London, opened the rally.



Anger in London

Outsourced workers including cleaners, porters and domestics at Barts are fighting for a proper pay rise. “While inflation is nearing 7.5 percent, they offered us

just 3 percent,” Arshad told the protest.

“We've been through the pandemic,” Arnold added. “We've had to go into places where a lot of people have had Covid, and we didn't even get proper PPE. But the government doesn't show us the same sacrifice we've given them.”

“Bosses won't give us a pay rise, while they're earning a hundred grand.”

“They don't understand what it's like—they don't know how much it is for a bottle of milk, or to buy clothes for our children. It's time for us to go to war with them.”

Two striking security guards from Great Ormond Street Hospital also spoke.

The workers—also outsourced—are demanding

the same pay and conditions as those employed directly by the hospital.

The strikers gave a boost to the protest—and a much needed sense of resistance. But there were none of the usual trade union leaders speaking—let alone any sense that they had mobilised their members to join the demonstration.

There were only a couple of trade union banners, brought by branch activists. Only Dave Ward, general secretary of the CWU union, sent a message to the rally.

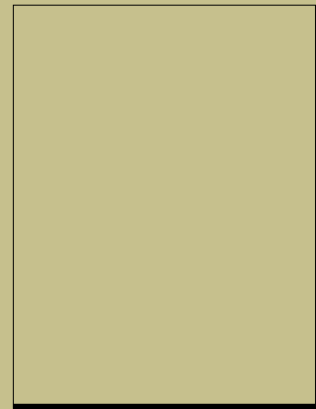
The message said the demonstrations were “an important moment, and a step towards building for a major demonstration later in the year.”

‘We need movement on the streets’

AROUND 500 mostly young people marched in Liverpool. Similar numbers marched in Glasgow.

Mercedes Villalba, Labour MSP for Scotland North East said, “Parliament is not going to fix this. The Scottish government is not going to fix this. The Scottish National Party is not going to fix this. We need the movement on the streets”.

Around 400 people



Protesting in Liverpool

and several Unite union banners protested in Manchester with Chep UK strikers addressing a rally.

Around 150 took part in Sheffield, 100 in Edinburgh and 85 in Leeds. There were 50 in Dundee, Aberdeen and Eastbourne, and 30 in Stoke.

The People's Assembly has called more actions on 5 March and 2 April.

Activists have to build these demonstrations—and demand their union leaders get behind them.

Labour lies can't hide true history of Nato

by NICK CLARK

KEIR STARMER was lying when he wrote last week that Nato—the US's warmongering military alliance—had “never provoked conflict.”

But he was telling the truth when he said Labour's commitment to the war machine is “unshakeable.” And he's also right that two of Labour's heroes—Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin—are to blame for setting it up in 1949.

This example of “Bevinite internationalism,” as Starmer grandly put it, had nothing to do with “peace and resistance to aggression.”

It was about the British state's role in the world as a military power—and the Labour Party's desperate desire to defend it.

At the end of the Second World War, the US looked to assert itself as a dominant world power by aligning Western countries against Russia. Setting up Nato was key.

Those at the top of the British state were keen to join. They thought joining Nato would help Britain keep its empire, and its power in Europe. British general Lord Ismay, Nato's first secretary general, said the alliance's aim was “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down”.

Desperate

For the same reason, Bevin was also desperate for Britain to have nuclear weapons.

Having heard of the destruction the US's atom bomb caused in Japan, he said, “We've got to have this thing over here whatever it costs. We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it.”

Attlee and most of Labour's leading politicians all thought the same. For them, it was about the vital question of securing the interests of the British state.

In a biography of Attlee, John Bew wrote that for Labour politicians, protecting the British state was about “preserving intact the field on which they fought their particular battles”.

In other words, if you want to use the state to deliver reforms then you have to keep it strong. And when the strength of the British state depends on siding with the US, Labour leaders commit wholeheartedly.

That's why Starmer isn't the fist Labour leader to rally behind a Tory government when it comes to war.

Neil Kinnock offered nothing but grovelling support to Tory prime minister John Major when he joined the US's first invasion of Iraq in 1991.

It's also why no Labour leader has ever promised to leave Nato. Both of the celebrated manifestos under



LABOUR LEADER Keir Starmer visited Nato to pledge his support last week

left wing leader Jeremy Corbyn committed the party's support.

This wasn't to do with some personal shortcoming of Corbyn. He's always personally opposed the US's wars—but the logic of the Labour Party compelled him to concede.

Labour MPs' biggest rebellions against him were over the question of war and “national security.”

They detested his anti-imperialism more than anything else. So they openly defied him to demand he committed to keeping Trident nuclear weapons and allow them to support bombing Syria.

Now Starmer is desperate to prove he's brought Labour back to its natural support for war.

Like leaders before him, he'll lie about the reasons—but Labour has always been a party of war, and that's the sickening truth.



On other pages...

Rigged—how government helps oil bosses >>Pages 10&11

Labour backs more cops

LABOUR'S LATEST right wing answer to the Tories' crisis is renewed posturing as “the true party of law and order.”

The party is planning to make crime a central part of its campaigning ahead of local elections in May.

Shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper used the crisis around Boris Johnson's lockdown parties to shift the focus to crime in “communities.”

“Boris Johnson shows a total lack of respect for the rule of law in Downing Street and a total lack of respect for people who are suffering when the law breaks down in their communities,” she said.

She added that Labour would prove itself “the true

party of law and order” by giving more resources to cops on the streets.

Cooper is a right wing veteran of Labour under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, when “tough on crime” meant increasing punishments and surveillance on working class people.

So Labour's response to Johnson's rule breaking is to turn away from anger at the corruption and arrogance at the top of society in favour of fear and suspicion of those at the bottom.

It means more support for the cops who harass young black people on the street, treat women with contempt—and who let Johnson off the hook.

Union could cut party funding over bin strike

A STRIKE by bin workers in Coventry has sparked a major clash between the Labour Party's national leadership and its biggest union funder.

Party leader Keir Starmer sided with scabbing council bosses after Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham warned she could cut Labour's funding over the dispute.

Coventry bin workers have been striking to demand a pay rise since January of this year—and are set to stay out every Monday to Friday until 23 March.

Yet rather than pay up, Coventry's Labour council has used its own private company to recruit scab workers to break the strike.

Graham, leader of the strikers' Unite union, said



Strikers and local council clash

the union's remaining funding to Labour “is now under review.” That includes both regional and national funding, and the fee it pays to be affiliated to Labour.

In an online strike rally, she said the Coventry Labour council has “gone to war with these drivers.” “Our wallet is closed to bad employers,” she said.

Yet an official Labour Party spokesperson replied with a further insult to strikers.

“These sort of threats won't work in Keir Starmer's Labour Party,” they said.

“We would have hoped that Unite would have got the message that the Labour Party is under new management.”

Business

Starmer's “new management” has been all about trying desperately to prove Labour is once more a “party of business.”

But that shift has inflamed tensions between Starmer and the leaders of some of the unions that fund the party.

If Unite cut its funding to Labour it would be the biggest challenge that Starmer's right wing leadership has faced so far.

It's significant that this challenge has come from workers fighting back.

There's no point in workers' union subs going to a Labour Party that refuses to stand up for them—and even attacks them.



Anti-racists mobilise in France before presidential election

by CHARLIE KIMBER

WITH TWO months to go before the first round of the French presidential election, anti-racists are taking to the streets.

They are putting forward an alternative to the leading candidates from the right, far right and fascists who are competing to beat the drum for brutally racist messages.

Last Saturday over 1,000 people marched for justice for Adama Traore, who was killed in police custody almost six years ago.

Assa Traore, his sister, said, "The next five years is ours, not the candidates'. The future belongs to us. Let's all reject racism, discrimination, social injustice, everything which reduces and divides us. Let's claim a world that resembles us."

Last weekend also saw a series of marches, meetings and cultural events organised by the national Antiracism and Solidarity Campaign that was launched this month.

It was kicked off by a demonstration in the capital Paris last Saturday evening.

There were also demonstrations in other towns and cities including Grenoble and Saulieu.

At the Saulieu protest hundreds of anti-racists mobilised against a meeting featuring the far right Islamophobe Eric Zemmour—a presidential candidate. Police using tear gas attacked protesters.

Financing

"He's holding his meeting, but we're holding our meeting too. He has billionaire financing. We wanted to be here to say that he had no place in Saulieu," said Frederic Pissot, general secretary of the CGT union federation in Cote-d'Or.

Counter protests have frequently met Zemmour's rallies. It's a positive development as for years there have been so few demonstrations at events held by the fascist Marine Le Pen.

Meanwhile Zemmour continues with Islamophobic filth. "I don't want to hear the muezzin's voice in France, and if I become president, I won't," he said in a television interview.

France should remain "the

FIGURE IT OUT

24% Incumbent Emmanuel Macron leads polls for the first round of the election

17% Fascist Marine Le Pen is in second in opinion polls, closely followed by Eric Zemmour

9% Jean-Luc Melenchon, the highest placed left candidate in fifth

landscape of churches," he added. In Toulouse a concert was followed by a football tournament in support of "Les Hijabeuses".

These are players who wear the veil and are now under threat from yet more anti-Muslim laws.

There have also been a series of smaller but important activists' initiatives.

At Bordeaux Sciences Po university socialists and anti-fascists blocked staircases and entrances to prevent a visit from Jordan Bardella—a leading member of Le Pen's National Rally.

In Paris on Wednesday of last week over 500 people gathered outside the Sorbonne university to repel a far right threat to a meeting called by Anasse Kazib.

Kazib, a revolutionary socialist, is trying to collect enough official nominations to run for president.

The large turnout meant that Generation Identity fascists who had threatened Kazib's meeting slunk into the shadows.

All these anti-racist events are important. But there is still a gap where there ought to be anti-racist demonstrations of tens of thousands called by the unions and the left.

Without that the political debate remains utterly dominated by right wing and racist forces—from president Emmanuel Macron rightwards.

Activists are now building for a demonstration in Paris on 19 March as part of the worldwide anti-racist mobilisations.

MOBILISATION IN Paris to defend revolutionary presidential candidate Anasse Kazib

CANADA

Far right tries to spread truck protests

POLICE HAVE removed Freedom Convoy protesters from Ambassador Bridge connecting Detroit in the United States and Windsor in Canada after a week-long blockade.

The Freedom Convoy was founded by truckers in opposition to Covid restrictions and vaccine mandates.

Since then the movement has overwhelmingly consisted of far right activists and conspiracy theorists.

Around 12 vehicles and 200 protesters blocked the bridge—the busiest land crossing in North America.

An Ontario judge granted an injunction last Friday to remove the protesters.

Cops moved in on Sunday and made arrests. Protests in

Trucks on Ambassador Bridge

favour of the movement were held in cities across Canada last weekend, with some 4,000 turning out in the capital Ottawa and 1,000 in Toronto.

Protesters waved Donald Trump and Confederate flags

and some fascist groups were present. The Freedom Convoy has sparked copycat actions in cities across the world.

In New Zealand crowds gathered in the capital Wellington.

In the US QAnon promoters have been encouraging actions, including an east to west coast convoy.

In Paris, France, a number of vehicles defied a police barricade to disrupt traffic at the Arc de Triomphe.

Now around 1,300 vehicles are travelling to Belgium from France to a banned demonstration in Brussels.

Far right forces hope they could have a resurgence by trying to spread the movement. **Sam Ord**

INDIA

Resistance to Muslim head coverings ban

ANTI-MUSLIM HATRED is spreading across India as hard right BJP supporters whip up a mood of fear.

Earlier this month a state school in the Udupi district of the southern state of Karnataka stopped women students from attending classes if they were wearing a hijab.

Now the number of schools banning Muslim head coverings appears to be growing. A school

in the city of Jaipur, in the state of Rajasthan, also joined the attack this week.

In Karnataka the move came after the state-wide education department banned clothes it said, "Disturb equality, integrity and public order".

When Muslim students protested, they were set upon by far right thugs dressed in saffron scarves—a colour associated with Hindu chauvinists. They

shouted, "Jai Shri Ram"—a religious slogan used as hate speech against India's religious minorities. In the days that followed thousands of people joined protests in support of the Muslim students.

The attacks come as the BJP government struggles in state-wide elections after its deadly mishandling of Covid and the farmers' movement that has galvanised the opposition.

Left owed credit in Portugal

I WAS a member of the International Socialists in the early 1970s and when the fascist regime fell in Portugal I went to live in Lisbon in 1975.

I am still in Portugal so it annoys me to read simplistic articles like "Strategy of Radical Left has failed in Portugal" (Socialist Worker, 2 February).

The article states that the parties to the left of Socialist Party were strategically wrong by cuddling up to it and, "disaster"—the growth of the far right—was the consequence.

Right wing and fascist politics have been growing in most western capitalist countries.

Portugal is not an exception. Where Portugal is exceptional is that when the fascists were defeated in the 1970s, several radical left wing parties came into being.

The Communist Party and the Bloco still have considerable support.

This support meant that in the last government the Socialist Party had to make concessions to the radical left.

This time, there were fears that the Socialist Party would be dependent on the right.

I think that, this time, people voted strategically for the Socialist Party in order to keep the right out.

The radical left has clearly been more successful in Portugal than the Socialist Workers Party has been in Britain.

John Voyce
By email

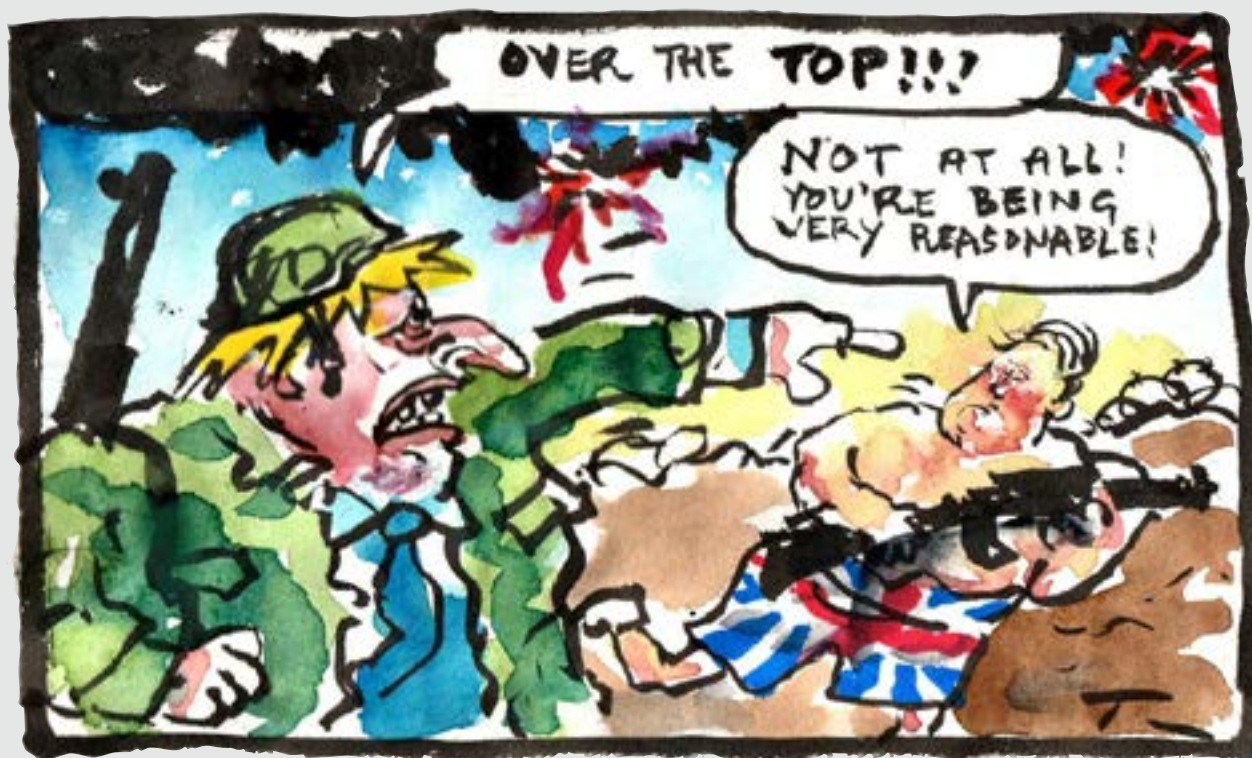


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Profit not Netflix to blame for unaffordable housing crisis

TV PRESENTER Kirstie Allsopp has been dishing out some helpful property advice, claiming she feels "enraged" when young people say they can't afford to buy a house.

If I had a pound for every time a rich person weighed in like this, I still couldn't afford a mortgage.

Allsopp has decided the youths need to hear some hard truths about how their Netflix subscriptions and coffees are the reason they can't afford houses.

She claims that when she was young she was able to buy her own house because she limited herself to "buying a lipstick" on payday.

"When I bought my first property, going abroad, the EasyJet, coffee, gym, Netflix lifestyle didn't exist," she said. Of course, it wasn't

long before people on social media pointed out that the Allsopp's dad—Baron Hindlopp—is minted.

The real problem is about spiralling property costs, and a system where the human right of housing is reduced to a commodity.

It's not about streaming services or takeaway coffees—it would take more cappuccinos than you could drink in a lifetime to afford the average house deposit.

And it's getting even harder for people to save up for a deposit, because of low pay, cost of living rises and soaring house prices.

People are forced to pay astronomical rents that just go towards their landlord's mortgage.

The average cost of renting a home has risen 8.3 percent in just

one year. It's an impossible situation for young people.

Each time people like Allsopp try and lecture others on financial responsibility it blows up in their faces.

So you'd think that by now it'd have occurred to them to stop doing it.

But it hasn't and it won't, because that would mean admitting they benefit from a system that allows a minority to amass staggering wealth, at the expense of the vast majority.

The only way to make them stop will be to redistribute the wealth they've managed to accumulate through exploiting everyone else.

Bethan Turner
East London

Just a thought...

Football fight is two halves

IT'S OKAY to suggest that footballers "ought" to come out to strike a blow for LGBT+ rights, (Socialist Worker, 2 February) but what's needed is unity.

Players and fans alike need to stand together and make it difficult for the bigots to speak out.

They could walk off the pitch or sit down during a game to stop racists or homophobes shouting abuse.

The fight is not for black or gay players alone—it is for all of us.

Heather Booker
Swansea

Northern fight needed

TIM LEUNIG, one of chancellor Rishi Sunak's top aides, thinks that workers in the north of England should "accept lower wages". This really shows the Tories with their mask off.

For all the rhetoric of levelling up, Tories aren't accepting responsibility for economic devastation and hardship.

Sadly low pay seems like it's becoming a northern tradition. We should revive the real history of struggle by taking part in protests and strikes for better pay.

Tom Kay
Sheffield

Where is Labour help?

I WAS really shocked when I found out one of the jailed Insulate Britain protesters was a Labour councillor, (Socialist Worker, 4 February).

I don't think I've heard a peep out of the Labour Party defending them.

David John
On Facebook

Yet another rule broken

IT'S HARD to believe that this shambolic government can still shock me.

But the news that Tory minister Gillian Keegan carried on with her day despite knowing she was Covid-19 positive is mind boggling.

How many rules are these scumbags happy to break?

Janet Dyer
East London

Socialists should fight for broader campaigns

IAN BIRCHALL raises some interesting points in his letter, (Socialist Worker, 2 February).

The Socialist Workers Party has the right policies but engaging with people is a slow process—and it can be hard going.

This is not a note of despair, but rather a call to extend our work to make contact with those sections of the class who are suffering.

We are small, and that means we have to work

with other people. This means using all opportunities to challenge the dominant philosophy.

A new electoral Labour Party concentrating on elections is no solution.

A united front involved in local campaigning allied to wider issues such as racism and climate change would create a wider base on which to build a revolutionary movement.

Ralph Tebbutt
Kent

Underbelly of homophobia exposed

THE RECENT trial of Gary Jenkins' murderers, a bisexual man killed in an attack in Cardiff 2021, showed up the homophobic attitudes of prosecutors.

The prosecution told the jury that Gary Jenkins' "sexual predilections would be his undoing" and that he was well liked despite his "lifestyle choices or peccadilloes".

These outrageously homophobic comments by the very people trusted with fighting for justice highlight that the state is not innocent nor neutral. There is a



A vigil for victims of attacks

widespread idea that is pushed from the top of society that the fight for liberation is pointless because of advances such as gay marriage.

But the everyday reality is more complicated. Some 81 percent of

LGBT+ people haven't reported experiences of hate crimes to the police—and it looks as though attacks are on the rise.

Fights for liberation have been co-opted and diluted to hide the trauma that working class women, LGBT+ and black people go through every day.

The state doesn't protect ordinary people.

But it does protect an oppressive system and that is why the fight for liberation is not over.

Jeandre Coetser
Liverpool

EXTINCTION REBELLION protesting against Shell in London in 2021

‘Not only do the big energy firms operating in the North Sea pay no tax—they receive rebates from the government’

FOR FOSSIL fuel bosses Britain is a kind of heaven. They can benefit from a privatised energy industry, tax perks—and a Tory party that falls over itself to roll out the red carpet to big business.

And there is one, still lucrative resource—the North Sea.

North Sea oil and gas projects are presented as a solution to the energy crisis and rising bills—despite the devastating environmental impact of new drilling.

All this is a lie. It’s not to bring down ordinary people’s bills that Tories are rushing to hand out new licences for new North Sea oil and gas projects.

Even if every company had their licences approved tomorrow, it would take years, even decades, for these projects to be operational.

There is no way new fields can extract enough oil and gas to stop energy prices from going up by 54 percent in April.

It’s all about making Britain an attractive place for fossil fuel companies to do business. Even Labour’s very limited call for a “windfall tax” on bumper profits was too much for Boris Johnson.

He said this would “clobber the oil and gas companies right now with a tax that would deter investment in gas just when this country needs gas as we transition to green fuel.”

Instead, energy companies operating in the North Sea pay no tax thanks to tax breaks designed to encourage them to do business there.

Not only that—they also receive

cheques from the HMRC tax office. This is largely thanks to tax rebates supposedly paid to them for decommissioning oil rigs.

Of all the energy companies that operate in the North Sea, a third are handed money from HMRC in negative tax. In the 2019-20 tax year, HMRC paid ExxonMobil £177 million, Shell £110 million, and BP £39 million. BP’s tax rate was minus 19 percent in 2020. The year before, it was minus 54 percent.

In contrast Shell paid over £730 million in taxes in Norway in 2019, where the tax rate on the company is at 78 percent.

Outrageously, this new plan to hand money to fossil fuel companies came in 2015—just months after the Paris Climate agreement. That’s yet another example of how little regard governments pay to their supposedly green commitments.

Windfall

But perhaps it’s no surprise that the Tories are so friendly with the oil and gas companies. Between July 2020 and June 2021, individuals and companies involved in North Sea oil and gas projects donated £419,900 to the party.

But the Tories aren’t the only ones committed to the fossil fuel industry.

And the Scottish National Party won’t even back Labour’s call for a windfall tax. But even the windfall tax itself isn’t enough.

It allows Labour to dodge calling on fossil fuel companies to be taxed properly in normal times—let alone nationalising them.

Taxing companies and renationalisation are important. But they should be the prelude to more radical change.

We desperately need an energy system that isn’t based on profit, and which turns it back on fossil fuel use entirely in favour of renewables.

Renewable energy sources such as wind farms would be much quicker to construct than an oil rig. In fact they would take months, not years, to be fully operational.

But to do this, power must be wrestled away from greedy bosses.



Amid deepening climate and energy crises, the world’s biggest fossil fuel companies still find an ocean of profits in the North Sea—thanks to tax breaks and handouts the British government gives them, writes Sophie Squire

A rough history—the North Sea and its exploitation

An Aberdeen local paper reports early news of the Piper Alpha disaster in 1988

THE BOSSES have always seen profit-making potential in the North Sea. BP first discovered substantial amounts of natural gas in British waters about 27 miles off the coast of east Yorkshire, in 1965.

In 1975 oil extraction began at the Argyll field off the northeast coast of Scotland.

By the 1980s Britain has become a lead exporter of oil, having extracted two billion barrels of the fossil fuel.

About a decade later Britain also became a significant exporter of natural gas.

For some time Britain was absolutely central to the energy trade. That’s why North Sea Brent crude oil is still used as a benchmark for oil pricing worldwide.

But the boom, at times, came at a great cost.

In 1988 a series of explosions

ripped through the Piper Alpha rig, 120 miles north east of Aberdeen, killing 167 workers.

The company which operated the rig, Occidental Petroleum Limited, believed that fire was so unlikely there was no need to prepare.

It put profits before the lives of workers, as other platforms nearby continued to feed fires with a supply of gas and oil.

Oil and gas extraction in the North Sea hit its peak in 2000-01 and has been in gradual decline since.

But energy companies are still drawn to extraction in North Sea. In recent years, new technology has opened up opportunities to keep on drilling.

The appeal of fossil fuel to the bosses in the North Sea has never just been about the resources.

The government has, since extraction began, essentially allowed

companies free rein there.

Licences historically have been handed out to any major company that wanted them, especially during the 1970s as multiple crises in oil and gas production unfolded.

Fossil

Business magnate T Boone Pickens remarked in his memoir that fossil fuel companies were easily persuaded to begin exploration in the North Sea.

“I couldn’t help thinking about the great possibilities across the Atlantic, especially when I learned that 50,000 acre tracts were being given free to companies willing to explore them,” he wrote.

“To oilmen used to paying millions just for the privilege of drilling, that was a real incentive.”

The privatisation of the energy industry only opened the door even

wider for companies to do as they pleased in the North Sea.

One of the first things Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher did when she came to office in 1979 was to sell off 5 percent of what was then majority state-owned BP.

By 1987 the government had let go of all control over BP. Then just over a decade later, the Electricity Act of 1990 privatised the whole industry.

So now, private companies can make huge profits selling gas all over the world to the highest bidder as energy prices rise.

Oil baron T Boone Pickens

‘We stopped an oilfield’ Campaigner Lauren MacDonald

CLIMATE CAMPAIGNERS last year paused the development of the Cambo oil field.

The company responsible for the project, Siccac Point Energy, could not continue construction after Shell withdrew funds.

Lauren MacDonald, an activist in the Stop Cambo campaign, told Socialist Worker that winning mass opposition to the project was essential to win.

“We aimed to stop the oil field, which was due to extract 179 million barrels and would be in commission by 2050,” she said. “By this time Britain is meant to have reached net-zero emissions.”

“The way we played our cards, we got a lot of media coverage and managed to raise a lot of awareness about the oil field.

“This applied a lot of pressure, especially to Shell.

“There was an intense backlash. It became so toxic for the companies involved.

Reputable

“The international energy agency stated last year that if we are going to keep global energy rises below 1.5 degrees, there must be no new fossil fuel projects.”

“With such a reputable source saying that, we were further able to gain support from the public.”

Lauren added that this victory proves that climate change is a massive issue for ordinary people despite what those at the top say.

“We see poll after poll that finds that ordinary people are terrified about climate change, but the problem is that so many of us feel powerless. I hope the victory over Cambo has shown that we do have a voice.

“Ordinary people are angry. Instead of investing in a just transition to



Lauren MacDonald

renewables, the Tories pump money into oil and gas companies. It’s just unforgivable.”

Laura added that the fight to stop fossil fuel extraction is inseparable from the battle against rising energy bills and fuel poverty.

“As it currently stands one in four households in Scotland are already living in fuel poverty. I’m already worried about how my family is going to cope.

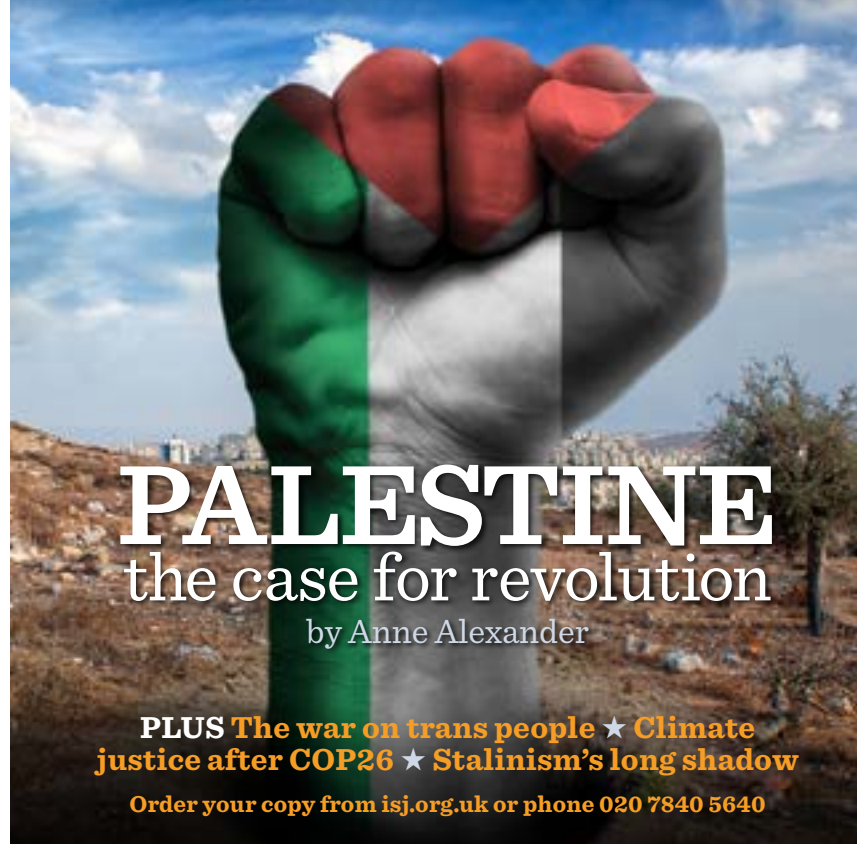
“The money is there for a just transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Just look at how much the state hands to energy companies every year.

“And it is also possible for those who work in the fossil fuel industry to be retrained to do green jobs. So no one needs to get left behind.

Lauren wants more people to join the movement to stop fossil fuel projects.

“We need to get organised”, she said. “There are over 30 oil and gas extraction projects looking to gain licences. We can’t stop with Cambo.”

International Socialism new issue out now



We need an energy system that turns its back on fossil fuel use entirely in favour of renewables

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings

LGBT+ History Month
How do we beat back the bigots and win liberation?

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Thu 24 Feb, 6.30pm
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St, Brighton BN1 1AF
818-9286-5617

CARDIFF

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
Mackintosh Residents
Community Centre,
Keppoch St, CF24 3JW
630-181-4857

DORSET

Sat 19 Feb, 1pm
Colliton House,
Dorchester,
DT1 1XZ
846-0613-4382

EAST MIDLANDS

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
354-874-4790

EDINBURGH

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House
7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL
431-459-112

HUDDERSFIELD

Wed 23 Feb, 6.30pm
290-168-1804

LEEDS

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
The Swarthmore Education
Centre, Yorkshire, 2-7
Woodhouse Square, LS3 1AD
881-4770-0676

LONDON: HARINGEY

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
Kurdish Community Centre,
1 Portland Gardens,
Harringay Ladder, N4 1HU
459-388-1576

LONDON: SOUTH

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
Karibu Centre, 7 Gresham
Rd, SW9 7PH
497-196-1801

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
Bernie Cameron Community
Centre, Merchant St, E3 4LX
818-391-0420

NORWICH

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

SWANSEA & WEST WALES

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Alban's Rd, SA2 0BP
902-964-963

ABERDEEN

Omicron, corruption
and crisis—how can we
get rid of the Tories?

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE
& STAFFORDSHIRE
Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan
and the West—are we
heading for war?

Wed 23 Feb,
7.30pm
914-9548-1031

BOURNEMOUTH
Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan
and the West—are we
heading for war?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House,
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825-4209-2711

BRADFORD

50 years of Asian
struggles in Britain
Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
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CAMBRIDGE

Does consumerism cause
climate change?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

CHESTERFIELD
Lenin—a revolutionary
for today?

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
13/14 Chesterfield
Rd, S40 1AR
828 532 8731

COVENTRY

Why are prices rising and how
do we make the bosses pay?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

DEVON & CORNWALL
Is Britain becoming
a police state?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
897 1685 8334

GLASGOW
The 1917 Russian
Revolution—festival
of the oppressed

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
Avant Garde, 34-44
King St, G1 5QT

HARLOW

Capitalism and the
roots of slavery

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HASTINGS

How to change the world—
reform or revolution?

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
The White Rock Hotel, 1-10
White Rock, TN34 1JU

HOME COUNTIES

Angela Davis—women,
race and class

Thu 24 Feb, 6.30pm
8341 170 103

KENT

Is revolution possible
in the 21st century?

Thu 24 Feb, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Sudan, resistance
and revolution

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Lane,
LA1 1TX
992-204-9372



The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Branches may also hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment. Usually these will be "hybrid" meetings with Zoom access as well.

For meetings held using the Zoom system, download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings

LONDON: HACKNEY

Why are prices rising and how
can we make the bosses pay?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
Halkevi Community Centre,
31-33 Dalston Ln, E8 3DF
854-8245-8715

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Why do we celebrate the
Russian Revolution?

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
854-8245-8715

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Mindshift: how culture
transformed the human brain

Thu 24 Feb, 7pm
529-913-6390

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Pamphlet launch: The
Shadow of Stalin

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
543-023-057

LONDON: WEST & NORTHWEST

Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan
and the West—are we
heading for war?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
860-0226-3484

MANCHESTER

Is Britain becoming
a police state?

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
323 178 7151

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND

Omicron, corruption
and crisis—how can we
get rid of the Tories?

Wed 23 Feb, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY

The right's war on 'woke'—
their free speech and ours

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
861-2001-6477

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH

YORKSHIRE
Anti-vaxxers, covid
and conspiracies

Thu 24 Feb,
7pm
528-174-9278

SOUTHAMPTON

From Blair to Starmer—
why won't Labour
oppose the Tories?

Thu 24 Feb, 7.30pm
381-513-5080

WIGAN

Why are prices rising and how
can we make the bosses pay?

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
Methodist Hall,
46 Market St,
WN1 1HX
894-2628-7708

YORK & SCARBOROUGH

Is human nature a
barrier to socialism?

Wed 23 Feb,
7.30pm
827-489-7492

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

NEWCASTLE

Stand Up To Racism Rally

Wed 23 Feb, 7pm
Tyneside Irish Centre,
43 Gallowgate,
NE1 4SG

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How the rich crashed the system—and made us pay

This documentary looking back on a decade of austerity reminds us who's to blame for the financial crisis—but also that we can fight, says **Rob Hoveman**

IN 2008 the world's financial system almost collapsed. Financial traders—people who moved around trillions of dollars on behalf of the world's multi-billionaires—had pushed their speculation too far.

The fall of Lehman Brothers in the US triggered a crisis of the trust on which the whole speculative bubble rested.

Gordon Brown as British prime minister then helped to coordinate a massive rescue plan for the financial institutions. This bailed them out whilst the rest of us suffered austerity for the next dozen years and more.

As Edward Luce put it about our current situation in the Financial Times newspaper recently, this was “socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor”.

This is the background to an excellent two-part BBC documentary, *The Decade the Rich Won*, which everyone should see.

The programme is really about the effects of what came about after the bailout—the so-called “quantitative easing” invented by then Bank of England governor Mervyn King.

Quantitative easing is the buying of government bonds by the central bank which are traded by those same speculators who almost crashed the system.

Scattered

To put it more simply the central banks simply printed vast amounts of money and scattered it across the financial markets.

Quantitative easing took off not just in Britain but in all the major Western central banks in 2009. Since then, the Bank of England alone has injected a massive £900 billion of

cash through this. It was supposed to stimulate economies that were bordering on stagnation following the 2008 crash. But as King makes clear in the second part, it failed to lift the British economy out of low growth.

Instead, it simply massively enriched the rich by inflating asset prices such as the price of stocks and shares and property. This is also the story of the last two years of lockdown. The programme interviews some of the main players, particularly in Britain. Most pathetic of them perhaps is the appalling Nick Clegg, former Lib Dem leader and deputy prime minister.

He hypocritically talks about the need for fairness. Yet he then says he could see no alternative to further enriching the wealthy who had been responsible for the original collapse.

But the programme also reminds us of the political as well as economic consequences. Three of these were—and still are—of most importance.

The first was the development in the establishment parties of that hypocritical agenda for “fairness” or, as Boris Johnson now puts it, “levelling up”. In its most radical and admirable form, it gave rise to Jeremy Corbyn becoming leader of the Labour Party.

The second was the rise of the populist right, represented in the programme by Donald Trump's former chief strategist Steve Bannon.

Reactionary

Rancid reactionary people took the opportunity to opine against the elites and the fact they had done so well whilst the rest of us suffered.

This is a tide Johnson also rode in his Brexit campaign.

But the third was the resistance that

erupted against austerity and the rapidly widening gap between the rich and the rest of us. The programme is full of the most fantastic reminders of this. It includes mobilisations against austerity imposed on Greece, around Occupy in the US, and in Britain and many other places.

With the price of commodities now rapidly rising, central banks are now trying to roll back on quantitative easing and raise interest rates. That's despite the fact that inflation hasn't actually been caused by quantitative easing and low interest rates.

Once again it is we who have to pay for the crisis of the system from which the rich have become so much richer.

But we can take solace from this programme that there will be further massive resistance to come.

The Decade the Rich Won is available now on BBC iPlayer

Meeting the US's new breed of far right activists

TELEVISION

LOUIS THEROUX'S FORBIDDEN AMERICA: EXTREME AND ONLINE

Available now on BBC iPlayer

TWENTY YEARS after first investigating US fascism, Louis Theroux is back stateside to peer into the loathsome world of the far right. At first blush not much has changed.

“Antisemitic is a made up term. Jews think they can't be criticised.” These could easily have been the words of Tom Metzger, the former KKK “grand

wizard” in Theroux's 2003 documentary. Instead they come from “Baked Alaska”, a streamer who is part of a new generation of far right activists.

This generation stands in the same political tradition as Metzger. But its strategy and tactics, and its aesthetic, have been reshaped by the Trump era.

The 2017 “Unite the Right” demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia was a key turning point—a public relations disaster for the far right. Open Nazis took to the streets with swastikas and torch-lit

marches with chants of “Jews will not replace us,” exposing the movement's antisemitism.

Pummelled between public outrage and anti-fascist mobilisation, the far right retreated into damaging internal debates.

Some argued for open terror. Just a year later, Robert Bowers massacred 11 people at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Antisemite Baked Alaska

Others argued that, if white nationalism was to go mainstream, it would need to dump the swastikas.

These included Nick Fuentes, a 23 year old YouTube star who is Theroux's main subject. Fuentes is a blend of social media influencer and traditional antisemite—a white nationalist provocateur for the social media age.

His hallmark is advancing racism while offering shelter behind the

idea that it is “just a joke”.

As one of Fuentes' followers says, “I'm not a political guy. I'm just a gamer, a comedian. Making edgy jokes on the internet is punk rock.”

Theroux perfectly describes this grim, nihilistic “comedy”—“playing at being racist while actually being racist and then accusing opponents of having no sense of humour.”

This is an important watch for those seeking to ensure that the Nazis don't have the last laugh.

Richard Donnelly

RADIO

POLITICAL ANIMALS

Fri 18 Feb, 11am, BBC Radio 4 and then on BBC Sounds

ZOOLOGIST Lucy Cooke is on a mission to break down the sexist stereotype she believes has permeated our understanding of the natural world.

She sets out to prove that females of the species can be just as fierce, ardent, manipulative, aggressive, varied and political as males.

Cooke questions some of the theories laid out by the “father of evolution”, Charles Darwin,

She hears from pioneering scientists moving evolutionary biology beyond a male-centric narrative.

For the opening episode, she uncovers stories of the female animals defying Charles Darwin's labelling of them as “coy”.

This takes her on a journey from soliciting capuchin monkeys, to promiscuous fruit flies, to the northern jacana bird which relies on a harem of males to raise her chicks.

Cooke also hears from scientists and specialists, including Megan Mah, Joe Cain, Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, Patricia Gowaty, Robert Trivers and Salvador Miralles.

What's on at...

Bookmarks

The socialist bookshop

Blood and Bronze: The British Empire and the Sack of Benin

David Olusoga in conversation with author Paddy Docherty

Monday 21 February, 6.30pm

Bookmarks Bookshop, London, WC1B 3QE

●Register online at shorturl.at/lmD24



Second Hand Sunday

A second hand book fair, thanks to a kind donation from the estate of Martin Pit

Sunday 20 February, 12 noon-4pm, Bookmarks, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE

bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

AFTER just two and a half years in the top job, it seems Boris Johnson's days as prime minister could be numbered.

At every stage of Johnson's career he's had a cleverly crafted persona—from bumbling buffoon to Britain's version of Donald Trump, to Churchillian statesman.

But the man behind the mask, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, has always been an elite, working class hating, Etonian toff, mired in corruption, backhand deals and bigotry.

Despite his attempts to pretend he's different, he's a classic Tory leader who has relied on populism and anti-establishment rhetoric to climb the career ladder.

Johnson is a particular example of a wider ideological mission for the Tories. Political populism is not just about devising policies that lots of people might support—all politicians do that.

It is about wrapping what are actually pro-business ideas in what look like a broader, cross-class appeal.

It is the deliberate construction of an ideology that can assemble people into a winning electoral coalition.

For much of Tory history it was done through imperialism. And it worked best when there is a targeted “anti-people”—an enemy determined to thwart the popular will.

This might be the statue-topplers who are tearing up “our” heritage, or the Black Lives Matter protesters who suggest Britain has a wretched past. Or it could be the judges blocking the people's desires over Brexit.

When he took over from Theresa May in the summer of 2019 Johnson provided a particular service for the ruling class.

JOHNSON WAS able to keep together groups of people based around an ideology of populist nationalism.

His tactics included posing as an anti-elite figure, which sometimes clashed with the interests of some Tories.

As foreign secretary, asked about corporate concerns over Brexit, Johnson replied, “Fuck business”.

It was part of developing himself as a figure who could subordinate his true elite characteristics beneath a persona that was designed for broad appeal.

Johnson has never had the clear class-based programme that someone like Margaret Thatcher offered to the ruling class in the 1970s.

She put forward a decisive set of ideas around breaking trade union power,



JOHNSON LOOKS to be on his way out

BORIS JOHNSON THE MAN OF MANY MASKS

The prime minister is in trouble after two years of corruption, incompetence and contempt for working class lives. Isabel Ringrose explains why his act may not work anymore

forcing down wages and restoring profit rates. Johnson was far more modest—his pitch was a way for the Tories to continue in government and maintain a hold on lucrative positions.

The ruling class has always shown great flexibility. It wasn't for nothing that the revolutionary Leon Trotsky spoke of “the exceedingly potent class dexterity of the world-ruling British bourgeoisie”.

In a much more amateurish way, Johnson supported any political position he could use to his advantage.

Starting his career as a celebrity Tory journalist, followed by Mayor of London,

80-seat majority in the general election of 2019.

The majority of bosses and their Tory backers wanted to remain in the neoliberal EU's single market to protect profits. But “get Brexit done” remained Johnson's rallying cry.

He said Britain would leave on 31 October 2019 “do or die” and “no ifs or buts”—which soon turned out to be more lies.

He shared his with Donald Trump—appear anti-establishment and on the side of ordinary people.

Johnson promised more money for police and prisons and infrastructure for “left behind towns”.

Hidden behind this were the real plans to raise the threshold people start paying the 40 percent income tax rate from £50,000 a year to £80,000.

Johnson's next move was to shut down parliament to stop legislation blocking his no-deal Brexit plans. This caused outrage, yet for supporters he was trying to win, he was bravely battling the elite.

When the bill to extend the Brexit deadline to 31 January 2020 was passed, followed by more resignations, Johnson marched towards a general election.

THE NEXT blow was the Supreme Court decision that his suspension of parliament was “unlawful, void and of no effect”.

He played the only card he had—pose as the defender of democracy against elite judges, MPs and the media who ignore 17.4 million Leave voters. This helped win him the 2019 election.

Johnson genuinely fell out with other sections of the ruling elite. But he was no anti-capitalist—he did what was necessary to overcome opposition forces and win.

To sell his policies, Johnson fell back on the Tory strategy of attacking “enemies” of the state.

Populists reach out to ordinary people who feel abandoned and ignored. They take policies that benefit the ruling class and paint them with a cross-class shine.

Rulers conceal their class prejudice and bigotry by relying on love for Queen and country.

Nationalism is built into ruling class ideology. That's why so-called threats to the nation's stability—migrants, foreign interference and the left—have to be crushed.

This cuts across class, makes scapegoats much easier to identify and is normalised through racism and so-called culture wars.

Johnson has pulled the Tory party further rightwards over racism and migration to keep them in power.

The fallout over Brexit isolated Britain from EU foreign policy, so Johnson is tied to US imperialism more than ever. That drives developments such

as the Aukus submarine deal and support for the US over Ukraine. His “global Britain”

With this goes the fake image of a strong Britain standing on its own two feet.

Nationalism is pumped up hard to compensate for the reality of an elite programme.

This has worked in the past for Johnson. But he can no longer rely on nationalism and bland statements about the sunlit uplands to come in order to convince people he is on their side.

Johnson rallied people around him during the pandemic by seemingly standing in the shadow of Winston Churchill, declaring war on coronavirus.

Despite being responsible for mismanaging the pandemic, test and trace failures, tens of thousands of deaths and three lockdowns gone wrong, he portrayed himself as statesmanlike.

Favouring big business with dodgy contracts, and reopening schools and workplaces and schemes to facilitate profit showed his true priorities.

But quite contrary to Tory instincts he was forced into a massive expansion of the role of the state to keep the system going.

He implored unity in the “unprecedented” time of crisis.

Johnson survived conceding over schools opening and free school meals, and he held on despite declaring “let the bodies pile high in their thousands”.

THE pandemic showed that forests of magic money trees do exist when the system needs them.

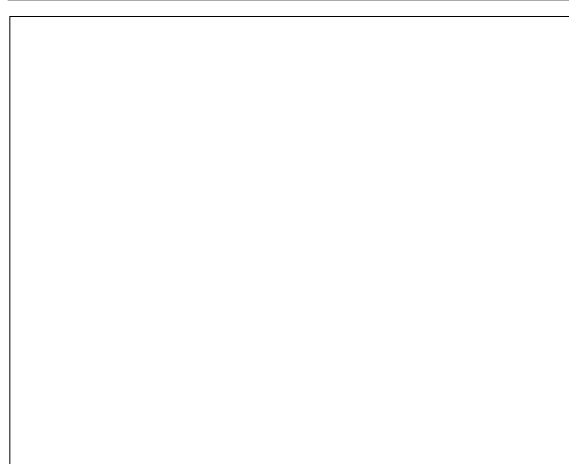
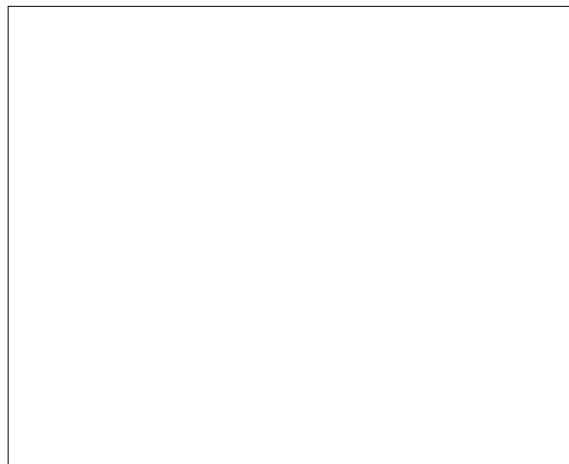
But now it is working class people who are told to pay the bills. As life has become tougher, questions over the funding of Johnson's lavish Downing Street flat, donations for holidays and lockdown parties surfaced.

Johnson was still able to paint himself as the bringer of joy when he ended lockdowns.

But the accelerating sense that he supported “one rule for them and another for the rest of us” has corroded his appeal.

He is at his weakest ever because he cannot rely on his usual tactics or posho mumbblings to back out of the Partygate and rising living cost crises.

He can try to use scapegoats to worm his way out, but it's clearer than ever whose side he is on. For a while he



A memorial to lives lost to Covid (top) The Black Lives Matter protests that Johnson condemned (above)

kept backbenchers on side by throwing away remaining pandemic restrictions.

Now Johnson's anti-establishment pose is collapsing.

The Tories increasingly sense he is an electoral turn-off rather than an asset.

He faces sharp class questions—the anger at one rule for them and another for us, the shattering assault on living standards and hiked costs of living.

But Johnson's hopes of survival are assisted by an opposition Labour Party that, instead of exposing class interests, has offered its own version of patriotism, “national interest” and cross-class unity.

Even then, Johnson's well-versed strategies may not be enough to claw him out the crisis that is built into the wider system he represents.

It makes him dangerous in a new way, ready to lash out and scapegoat in order to find new sources of popularity.

The longer there is a lack of resistance from below, the longer he can attempt to ride this wave of anger, rally his forces and steady his reign again.

READ MORE

● **Boris Johnson—A Dangerous Man** by John Newsinger £2

● **The Tories' ability to adapt brought dominance** ~ by Simon Basketter bit.ly/toryhistory

● **Corruption scandal—Tories used pandemic for profit** by Sam Ord bit.ly/corruptionscan

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



What should decide when a joke is not a joke?

A disgusting ‘joke’ about the Holocaust has outraged some, while others stand by it. **Sam Ord** explores why it’s never acceptable to boost oppression

COMEDIAN JIMMY Carr triggered widespread outrage over his so-called “joke” about the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Holocaust experience during the Nazi regime.

Just a week after Holocaust Memorial Day, Carr described the systematic killing of GRT people as a “positive” in his Netflix special His Dark Material.

GRT people brand the Holocaust as the Porajmos or Devouring. Around 500,000 GRT people were selectively murdered by the Nazis. Many more were pushed into labour camps, sterilised and used for medical experiments.

Tory health secretary Sajid Javid joined those expressing opposition to Carr, branding his comment “horrid”.

But outrage from Javid, whose party is pushing the anti-GRT police and crime bill, is completely hypocritical.

Constrained

Carr hasn't walked into this situation blindly. He's made a calculated attempt to tap into an audience that feels constrained by “wokeness” and embraces some right wing ideas.

He adopts a more careful face for his lucrative television appearances and then a manufactured “edginess” for his live shows and the spin-off DVDs.

And Netflix bosses allowed his programme on its global platform. They choose to show what is profitable, regardless of the wider impact.

They do this while simultaneously releasing series with more diverse casts and storylines in the wake of movements such as Black Lives Matter.

Jimmy Carr made a sickening ‘joke’ about the Holocaust and Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

Some have rushed to Carr's defence. They claim that opposition to him is another example of “cancel culture”.

Instead they argue for “freedom of speech”.

But “freedom of speech” is a myth—and our rulers and the rich know it.

They constrain what is said by their ownership and control of much of the media, and sometimes they directly use violence or censorship to drown out opposing views.

Carr's “joke” wasn't about freedom but normalising speech that can lead to hate crime on the streets or roll backs of rights.

Not all targets of jokes are equal.

A joke about the queen or the Tories is not the same as one directed against Muslims or migrants.

The difference is that some groups are oppressed and face repressive laws. Others hold the power within the system that bolsters oppression.

It's right to laugh at the powerful even—or especially—if it causes horror and outrage from those at the top.

But often comedy isn't as simple as punching upwards—against Boris Johnson, the royals or the corporations. Blows can go sideways.

Comedy can be powerful, exposing the hypocrisy of the system and its defenders. But it can also encourage prejudice and support for ruling class ideas.

There is a long tradition of racism in British

comedy that reinforced negative stereotypes. And for a long time it was completely unchallenged.

In the 1960s a black comedian called Charlie Williams acted as his audience and employers expected.

He used phrases such as, “If you don't laugh, I'll bring my tribe in and we'll eat the lot of you.”

Bus

But Williams also made jokes such as “When Enoch Powell said, ‘Go home, black man,’ I said, ‘I've got a hell of a long wait for a bus to Barnsley.’”

In the 1970s Williams was joined on television by Kenny Lynch, the butt of Bruce Forsyth's and Jimmy Tarbuck's jibes about black people.

Eventually, largely because of wider movements in society, that sort of comedy was challenged and marginalised. And many comedians themselves turned against it.

Comedy can be illuminating, biting, fun and an escape. It can also entrench oppression.

So who is targeted—and why—matters.

We have to be ready to defend those who face the brunt of bigotry.

The Me Too movement managed to pull some sexist and predatory comedians from platforms such as Netflix.

The same can be done over “jokes” such as the horrendous one made by Jimmy Carr.

Johnson and the queen

Music industry bosses are the real pirates

by SIMON BASKETTER

NEIL YOUNG pulled his music from Spotify over podcaster Joe Rogan's Covid misinformation—but that won't stop the platform's profits.

On Spotify musicians get paid a tiny fee per stream. Podcasters get paid up front—£73 million in Rogan's case.

Spotify recorded £9 billion in revenue in 2021. And it's set to make consistent profits for the first time since it was set up in 2006.

At that time the options were to pay for a digital or physical album or song—or illegally download music for free using a file sharing service.

The latter was becoming increasingly popular.

Annual US music revenues were falling. From an inflation-adjusted peak of £18 billion in 1999, they dropped to £5 billion by 2014.

Spotify now has 406 million users—180 million of whom pay. The rest provide cash for the company by listening to adverts.

It accounts for 20 percent of all recorded music revenue, far more than competitors.

Before Spotify the music industry sued streaming services out of existence. But they made a deal ahead of Spotify's 2011 US launch.

The big labels, including Warner Music Group, Sony, and Universal Music Group, received a combined 18 percent ownership stake in Spotify.

One executive said the platform was created to solve the problem of piracy, not "to pay people money".

So Spotify keeps a third of the royalty payments. The rest goes to music rights holders. In 2020, this share of revenues was £4 billion.

That is further divided between recording rights and publishing rights.

Under the terms of most record deals, labels often retain an artist's master rights, meaning they own the actual sound recordings. But artists more often retain their publishing rights, which means they still own the compositions of their songs—the lyrics, melodies and arrangements.

So record companies have recovered from the growth of music piracy and made money at both ends of the deal.

Other vultures have joined the scam. When an artist "sells their catalogue" they sell their publishing rights.

For instance Neil Young, Barry Manilow and Gil Scott Heron's publishing rights are all owned by private equity companies.

Rights

Publishing rights are what is paid whenever a bar or a radio station plays a song, or an advert or film uses it.

Currently £3 billion a year is being spent by vulture capital buying up music rights. But in 2020 the number of recording artists whose catalogues generated £36,000 or more on Spotify was 13,000.

That's out of eight million creators. Just 2 percent make more than £1,000 a year.

The actual average per-stream payout is £0.0026 if—and it is if—these royalties make it back to the artists. Some get nothing.

The economics of podcasting is more straightforward. Spotify takes in money for hosting adverts on podcasts it owns.

It is prepared to pay a fee for big name podcasts to strengthen its position as the place to go for podcasts.

The £73 million for the Joe Rogan Experience podcast was the equivalent of a publishing rights deal.

Exclusive

Spotify bought exclusive rights to 11 years of the reactionary Rogan's podcast back catalogue and future ones.

More central to its podcast

structure is that Spotify owns ad hosting platforms where you can post your podcast.

It takes up to 50 percent of the advertising revenue off people who post podcasts without having to pay them anything.

In both cases the key is to be the largest player to produce the most methods of making sure those who have wealth keep it.

It seems the real pirates won after all.

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Tory plan leaves millions waiting for NHS treatment

Shocking figures predict NHS waiting lists will continue to rise for years to come. Yuri Prasad says the Tories are using crisis to drive privatisation

THE NUMBER of people waiting for planned hospital care could rise to more than 10 million within the next two years. And it could stay that high for years to come.

That's according to shocking government documents leaked to The Spectator this week. The magazine says that even the "best case scenario" envisages waiting lists of 9.2 million.

That will mean a life of pain and fear for those needing essential treatment, such as knee and hip replacements—and even for some of those with life threatening conditions.

The revelations came as Tory health secretary Sajid Javid admitted that the NHS backlog would keep on growing. It is already at a record 6 million patients.

As Javid announced his "elective recovery" plans to deal with the crisis it was clear his aspirations were incredibly low.

They include that no one should wait for treatment for more than two years. And, that in four years' time—by 2025—waiting lists should be no longer than a year.

Even those told by their doctors that they require immediate treatment for cancer are to be failed.

Ambitions

Javid says he "hopes" that by summer of next year, the time they spend waiting will be limited to "just" two months.

And after the health secretary's announcement, NHS leaders were quick to say that his new time limits were "ambitions" rather than binding targets. That means even these



YEARS OF underfunding mean NHS waiting lists are going to soar

PIC: JORI SAMONEN/ FLICKR

terrible waiting times may not be met.

Behind the government's recovery plan lies an attempt to shovel money towards the private sector.

"Addressing long waits is critical to the recovery of elective care and we will be actively offering longer-waiting patients greater choice about their care to help bring these numbers down," said Javid.

"Greater choice" is a Tory euphemism for "go private".

That means money raised by upping National Insurance contributions is going straight into the pockets

of big business.

And in this, Javid takes no account of the way both the NHS and the private sector are desperately short of staff.

Any expansion of the private sector will come at the cost of fewer doctors and nurses in our health service.

In the wake of the Covid crisis there needs to be an expansion of the NHS on a scale not seen since its foundation.

Waiting lists were already at record levels even before the pandemic. After ten years of Tory austerity cuts

they stood at a massive 4.4 million, with 1,600 waiting more than a year to get initial treatment.

A recent report from the National Audit Office estimated there were 7.8 million to 9.8 million "missing" hospital referrals so far during the pandemic.

Javid's plan is at best a distraction from the Tories' real aim—the managed decline of the National Health Service.

NHS Day of Action, Saturday 26 February. Protests across Britain. Go to sosnhs.org for details

'I'm left feeling vulnerable and anxious,' says patient

PETER, WHO lives in Birmingham, has had a string of medical problems since getting Covid late in 2019.

He is one of millions of people waiting for important surgery, and for whom there is no end in sight.

The NHS worker is waiting for an operation to treat a hernia he thinks resulted from the mammoth coughing fits that accompanied the virus.

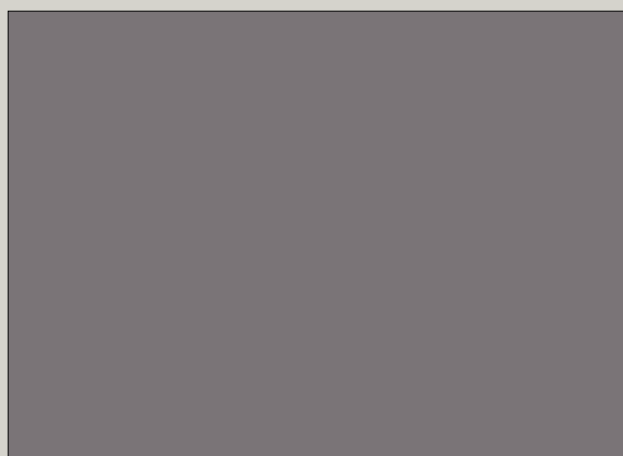
"The hernia was diagnosed in August last

year and I've still not had a date for treatment," he told Socialist Worker.

"The pain is a bit like having a low-level tooth ache. You can live with it, but it's always there in the background.

"The feeling is uncomfortable and you're always aware that there's a bit of your bowel protruding through your stomach muscles."

Peter says that he, like millions of others, has been left to fend for himself during the long wait. "Since getting Covid,



Long waits for treatment are only the start of the NHS's problems

I've had blood clots on my lungs, and my gall bladder removed, and now this," he said.

"And with all of them, it's the same. Once you've left hospital you are on your own. There's little or no follow up. No physio. No dietician. No real plan for ongoing monitoring."

The end result is a feeling of abandonment.

"Hospitals seem to expect you just to treat yourself by looking up things on the internet. That just leaves me feeling vulnerable and anxious."

Myth of NHS staff recruits

SAJID Javid announced his recovery plan promising a huge NHS recruitment campaign.

He said there'd be 10,000 more nurses—recruited from overseas—and 5,000 extra health care support workers to "increase capacity".

No one should believe a word of this.

Remember when Boris Johnson promised in 2019 there would be soon be 50,000 more nurses? Well, it soon turned out that figure included 19,000 existing nurses that he hoped to persuade not to leave the profession.

Or what about Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt? In 2015, he promised to add an extra 5,000 GPs by 2020. By that year the number of local doctors had actually fallen.

Then came hapless Matt Hancock. He pledged an extra 6,000 GPs by 2025. Yet in November last year Javid admitted that this plan had also failed.

"I'm not going to pretend we're on track when we're not," he said.

Privateers are cashing in

PRIVATEERS were licking their lips as the health secretary announced his plans.

And they certainly won't have to walk far to access the prime minister.

Boris Johnson this week appointed Samantha Jones to be Downing Street's "chief operating officer".

Jones was until last year the head of Operose Health—the British subsidiary of US private health firm Centene.

Operose is busy trying to Hoover up contracts to run health centres and GP surgeries across Britain.

Once taken over, the NHS staff and patients suddenly find themselves in the private sector without anyone having consulted them.

That is the real meaning of Tory "choice" in healthcare.

IN BRIEF

Day of action called for scaffolders

SCAFFOLDERS from the British Steel site in Scunthorpe passed their 100th day of strike last week.

Workers at the North Lincolnshire site are paid up to 15 percent below the nationally-agreed rate by contractor Actavo.

On Monday they protested in Immingham outside a contractor that has been doing some of the work done by the striking workers.

The Unite union has called a national day of action next Tuesday at the Scunthorpe site.

●Assemble Tue 22 Feb, 6am, British Steel, Entrance D, Brigg Road, Scunthorpe, DN16 1DL. For more go to Support The Actavo Scaffolders' Strike on Facebook

Hospital workers fight privatisation

DOMESTIC AND catering workers in Lancashire hospitals are preparing to strike after their jobs were transferred to the private sector.

The Unison union members are being outsourced to hated private firm OCS, which is known to pay workers well below NHS pay rates.

Action by workers at Harbour hospital in Blackpool and the Blackburn Royal Infirmary is scheduled for March.

Two weeks left for new Glasgow ballot

COUNCIL WORKERS in Glasgow are building for strikes in their long running battle for equal pay. Their ballot for action closes on 1 March.

Members of the Unison, GMB and Unite unions could walk out for the second time over the council's sexist pay grades.

Glasgow City Council is dragging its heels over implementing a fairer pay and grading scheme and giving workers a second payout.

Fracking well over at Preston New Rd

CLIMATE campaigners were celebrating last week after plans were announced to dismantle fracking wells at Preston New Road site in Lancashire.

It represents a major victory in a key battle against fossil fuel exploration in Britain. Operations were stopped there in August 2019 following years of protest and Britain's biggest fracking-related earthquake.

Housing activists to meet for fightback

THE HOMES For All campaign has called a Cost of Living summit on Saturday 12 March.

Housing activists will discuss key problems as a result of the pandemic and hike in living costs, and what can be done to fight back.

●Register for the summit at bit.ly/3Gt2dxh

GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL



PICKETS SHOULD have the right to make noise

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Stand with strikers against anti-union law

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

STRIKING SECURITY guards at Great Ormond Street Hospital (Gosh) in central London are facing a huge attack on their right to picket.

A court injunction bans the Uvw union members, the union's co-founder Petros Elia and supporters from waving banners within 200 metres of the hospital.

It has thrown down the gauntlet to the whole trade union movement. Every trade unionist, socialist and campaigner should show solidarity with the Gosh workers. The best response is to defy the ban through mass pickets supported by labour movement.

Other breaches listed by the injunction include shouting, and rapid and dramatic movement, including "vigorous dancing", and any other loud

noise. The injunction demands restrictions on protest outside the Paul O'Gorman Building, where strikers have regularly rallied.

And it threatens those who break it with fines—and even imprisonment.

The Gosh security guards began a six-week strike earlier this month for the same pay and terms and conditions as workers directly employed by the NHS. They want to be brought back in-house from outsourcing giant Carlisle Support Services.

Last week workers held a spirited rally outside the hospital, attended by up to 200 supporters including former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

The strike has amassed support from across the trade union movement, including activists in the PCS, RMT and Unite unions.

The injunction shows bosses at Gosh are rattled by

the prospect of a long strike. Strikers are also suing Gosh for racial discrimination over pay inequality.

The Uvw union described the injunction as an "unprecedented attack on the civil liberties of the union movement" and said it "will resist it vigorously."

The union was set to fight the injunction in court on Wednesday of this week.

The case could have implications for the whole trade union movement. If bosses win it could set a dangerous precedent.

It could allow any boss to ban protests and pickets they don't like more easily. And this will only get worse if the Tories' police bill comes into force.

This means that every trade union and campaign must build solidarity with the Uvw and the strikers' right to picket and protest.

SCHOOLS

Teachers strike to save their pensions

TEACHERS AT 23 private girls' schools across England and Wales walked out last Thursday to protect their pensions and defy fire and rehire tactics.

The strike—by around 1,500 workers in the NEU union—is the first strike in the Girls Day School Trust's (GDST) 149-year history.

Bosses want to fire staff and rehire them on an inferior contract without the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).

Strikers joined around 50 lively and large picket lines on the first day of the strike with staff, students, former pupils, parents and local campaigners uniting to boost the action.

Speaking to an online rally hosted by the NEU, teacher Hannah Harrison-Hughes said, "It's a scary thought that this new pension could run out by the time I'm

78. And it's even more frustrating that the benefits I've already accumulated won't grow as they would have."

She added, "It's a pension that I paid into in good faith, and had every right to get what I was promised. It's a huge loss and it's insulting."

Workers are set to strike again on Wednesday and Thursday of next week and the first three days in March if bosses don't back down.

■TEACHERS AT Gordano school in Bristol have voted to stop strikes over workload.

Members of the NEU union had been set to strike for six days, starting from 3 February.

But the union called strike off after "productive talks" with bosses.

TRANSPORT

Build for big Tube action

LONDON Underground workers are preparing to walk out on 1 and 3 March to fight for jobs, pensions and working conditions.

Transport for London bosses hope to cut up to 600 jobs in order to save money.

A ballot of more than 10,000 workers, announced in January, hit the 50 percent threshold with 94 percent voting to strike.

A number of workers wanted action to happen soon after and for the union to call substantial strikes. This would have clashed with a large number of

workplaces reopening.

Instead the RMT leaders delayed action and have only called 48 hours of action.

The delay risks losing momentum built during the ballot.

Union activists should build for the action with involvement across all grades.

Mass meetings wider than just RMT reps and officials must happen with workplace discussions being vital.

A big fight is needed to protect jobs and conditions—as well as passenger safety—with strikes by all workers, and large picket lines.

AVANTI WEST COAST

Cleaners reject filthy pay offer of just 6p more

TRAIN CLEANERS working on Avanti West Coast trains are set to take two 48-hour strikes for fair pay.

The outsourced cleaners are paid just £9.68 per hour and receive no sick pay.

That has forced many to frequently come into

work while sick as they can't afford not to.

Yet outsourcing company Atalian Servest LTD offered just 6p more per hour.

The two 48-hour strikes are set to begin place on Thursday of next week and Thursday 10 March.

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS



On strike in Cleethorpes

No Sunday ticket checks until better pay cheques

CONDUCTORS employed by TransPennine Express walked out on Sunday in the first of four weekly strike days over pay discrimination.

The workers have had a two-year pay freeze enforced on them. Now conductors in the RMT union are demanding an increase in pay for working

on their days off and on Sundays.

There is a large gap between what they get paid for working these days, and what other train crew get.

The workers are also not booking onto any overtime and will refuse to scan tickets electronically.

They are set to strike every Sunday.

STAGECOACH

Don't delay bus drivers' action in Gloucestershire

OVER 300 Stagecoach bus drivers in Gloucestershire have voted overwhelmingly for strikes over pay. Many of the drivers are paid less than £11 an hour.

If strikes go ahead it will affect depots in Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud, Colway and Ross-on-Wye.

Yet the workers' Unite

union has delayed calling action for further talks with bosses.

The best way to get bosses to back down is to call action immediately.

Unite is also balloting its members at Stagecoach's depot in Swindon with results expected to be announced on Monday of next week.

DISTRIBUTION AND WAREHOUSE WORKERS

An all-out strike wins big at Wincanton B&Q

by ISABEL RINGROSE

Wincanton B&Q workers in Worktop have won a 10.75 percent pay deal after striking since November last year.

The 475 Unite union members returned to work last Sunday after a long and determined battle. Pickets continued until the workers' vote on the offer was revealed last Friday.

The one-year deal includes a basic 6.75 percent backdated pay rise to July for the upcoming year.

Pandemic

Additional bolt-ons include back pay for the period, including while on strike, and a £250 payment for working through the pandemic.

In total these improvements raise the increase for this year to 10.75 percent.

Bosses will also guarantee that holidays meant for last year are carried over to this year.

The solid action by workers for three months shows the impact walkouts can have. And an all-out strike was far better than partial action.

Pay deals in the private sector are currently averaging



STRIKES FORCED the bosses to retreat

PICTURE: UNITE EAST MIDLANDS

3 percent while RPI inflation is set to continue to soar above the current 7.5 percent.

B&Q originally offered 4 percent and wanted the strikers to settle on a two-year deal. As the strikers have won a huge increase because of their fightback.

But the package of extra payments will mean that in upcoming negotiations in May for the next annual pay

increase, due for July, the starting point for a rise will be 6.75 percent.

Some 366 strikers voted in the ballot with 78 percent accepting it.

That means around 82 workers voted to reject the offer. So there was an appetite among the strikers to win more than the deal that's now been made. Workers rightly can see prices are rising and

that there will need to be a further battle to defend and improve living standards.

But Wincanton strikers have shown they are willing to take long action to win better pay. They should be ready to do the same and win should B&Q bosses make another measly pay offer.

And their fight shows the victories workers can achieve when they fight together.

MANUFACTURING

Chep UK workers are up for continuing pay fight

PALLET MAKERS at Chep UK in Manchester will continue their solid fight for a pay rise after voting for further strikes by an even bigger margin than when they started.

The first vote was 74 percent in favour of action. This time it was 94 percent.

Chep striker and Unite union rep Gary Walker told Socialist Worker, "Chep was hoping for the swing to go the opposite way. There are a couple of lads who were quite open at the beginning that they didn't want to come out on strike. But they didn't want to cross the picket and since have come out with us."

Gary added that the support has been "unbelievable and fantastic". Chep is being hit hard by the strike and "the more this goes on the more there is an expectation that what we want will rise," Gary

said. "Other companies are settling disputes for higher offers than we were willing to settle on."

"The original demand was 5 percent. But as this has gone on the lads are saying we're underselling ourselves. We've not done all this to carry on struggling to make ends meet."

Gary added that "Out of our workers we have Slovaks, Polish, Portuguese, Turkish and people from the Czech Republic and Africa."

"I've got more in common with an African or an eastern European cleaner than someone from Eton. Working people are told this is the system we live by and there's no alternative. We have to fight for something other than this."

● Tweet messages of support to @unite_northwest. Donations to Unity Bank NW/1 Strike Fund. Sort code 60-83-01 A/C 20217873

STEEL WORKERS

Fight needed to save all the jobs at Liberty Steel

A BOSSES' crisis is threatening thousands of workers' jobs.

Speciality Steel UK Limited, a division of Liberty Steel, which employs about 2,000 people in England, faces winding up orders. Subsidiaries Liberty Pipes, Liberty Performance Steels and Liberty Merchant Bar also face moves to close them down.

The companies, owned

by metals tycoon Sanjeev Gupta, owe money to the tax authorities (see page 2).

Steel unions GMB, Unite and Community have called for the government to take action, but say this just involves talks with the management.

If bosses announce any job cuts there should be strikes—and pressure for democratic public ownership of the whole sector.

PAY DEALS

Strike to hit weak bosses

IN A sign of the potential for unions to win big pay rises, the Unite union has announced a series of important deals.

And remember these were won without a strike, raising the issue of what could be won with serious action.

Workers at Luton airport have agreed a pay increase of 9.2 percent. The deal is worth £1,800 to each of the 600 workers.

Meanwhile workers at BMW's Mini production plant in Cowley, Oxford, who were being balloted over strikes, have settled a three-year pay deal.

Overall Unite says it's worth 26.1 percent.

In the first year the deal is backdated to 1 January and workers will receive a 5.5 percent increase and a lump sum payment of £1,500 split across the year.

In the second and third years workers will receive an increase in line with

the RPI inflation rate or 2.5 percent, depending on which is highest. They will also receive a £1,000 payment in April and if RPI is above three percent in June a further £500 in July.

And strikes due to start last week at Heathrow Airport have been called off by the 400 workers employed by Menzies Aviation.

Ground handling workers will receive a 7 percent rise backdated to 1 January and a pay review in May.

Joint Venture refuelling workers will receive a payment of £3,000 and a six percent pay increase backdated to 1 January.

British Airways refuelling workers will also receive a payment of £3,000 and a 2022 pay review in October.

Labour shortages and supply chain fears have put some bosses on the back foot. Struggle can ram that home.

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

National pay vote in PCS

CIVIL SERVICE workers across Britain are voting in a union-wide survey on whether to strike over pay and pensions. The consultative ballot of PCS union members began on Monday of this week.

The union is asking its members whether they would be prepared to strike for demands including a pay rise of 10 percent, and a minimum wage of £15 an hour.

It launched the survey on Monday with a live meeting streamed on Facebook. The survey, set to end on Monday 21 March, could be followed by a legal strike ballot.

■ IT WORKERS on a number of government contracts have voted to strike over pay. PCS members working for Atos IT Services voted by 90 percent for strikes on a turnout of 62 percent.

Bosses have offered workers a pay rise of just 1.5 percent.

HEALTH WORKERS

Barts set for new strikes

BARTS HEALTH NHS Trust strikers in London have finished two weeks of strikes but are ready for more action.

Hundreds of workers employed by outsourcer Serco, at the Royal London Hospital, Whipps Cross and St Bart's are battling for a 15 percent pay rise. They are expected to strike from 28 February.

The Unite union is demanding NHS benefits such as double pay on weekends and bank holidays.

Serco's contract with Barts ends in April 2023. But at present the workers will then be handed on to another profit-hungry corporation on the same terms as now.

If scheduled talks don't go the way workers want, the strikes have to move to all-out and indefinite action.

● Donate to the strike fund. Name: Unity Trust, A/C number: 20344885, sort code: 60-83-01, Reference: Barts Strike

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY

Cambridge students in solidarity with Palestine

STUDENTS AT Cambridge University disrupted a talk by Israel's racist ambassador Tzipi Hotovely on Tuesday of last week.

More than 100 protesters drowned out Hotovely as she spoke, chanting and banging drums outside the venue. They then sat down to block the road as she tried to leave.

Students from Cambridge Palestine Society called the protest after Hotovely was invited to speak at the Cambridge Union.

It came after Tory and Labour politicians attacked students at the LSE university in London for protesting against Hotovely in November last year.

But students at Cambridge pushed ahead with the protest. They began outside the front of the venue, where a handful of Cambridge Union members queued to get in. They then marched

to the back of the venue, close to the room where Hotovely was speaking.

Protesters were told that people inside complained they couldn't hear Hotovely over the noise from outside. As Hotovely tried to leave, protesters sat in the road, blocking the entrance to the car park.

One member of the Cambridge Union, not part of the protest, says he was racially profiled by security on his way into the debate. Junior doctor Zeshan Qureshi said security singled him out and "asked if I was a member of any Palestinian organisations and whether I was planning to cause trouble."

In an open letter—signed by more than 1,200 people—Cambridge Palestine Society linked Hotovely's own racism to Israel's apartheid system.

● Read more at bit.ly/Palestine0222



A SOLID picket line at Imperial College in central London

PICTURE: RODDY SLORACH

BIG PICKETS IN NEW UNIVERSITY STRIKE

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

TENS OF thousands of university workers began a five-day strike over pensions on Monday with solid picket lines across Britain.

UCU union members at 44 universities are fighting to defend their USS pension scheme from cuts of up to 35 percent. It has become a focal point for workers' anger at wider attacks across higher education.

Caitlin, a UCU member at Queen Mary in east London, says she's "striking for my future". "I want to stay in the field," she told Socialist Worker.

"At the moment with bad pay, worse pensions and high workload people are leaving, there's no incentive to stay."

"We feel like there is no future for us in academia, so we have to fight back."

Caitlin added that even though she's not part of the USS pension scheme it is essential to support the action. "Coming out together

is really important, of course," she added. "I'm striking for the people I work with."

The UCU members' action comes ahead of a two-day walkout at 68 universities from Monday of next week.

It will unite two disputes—the first over pensions and the second over pay, workload casualisation and equalities, known as the "four fights".

And then workers at 63 universities plan a three-day walkout over the "four fights" from 28 February.

Carlo Morelli, UCU Dundee university branch co-chair, told Socialist Worker, "There's been a good atmosphere. A lot of people on the pickets have been linking the dispute with rising poverty and the cost of living crisis."

"But there are also a lot of questions about the UCU's strategy being discussed as well as the democracy of the strike. To many, it is very clear that what is really needed is indefinite strikes that link the two disputes."

At Queen Mary, bosses have threatened to deduct



A vibrant strike rally in Glasgow

London strike demonstration

UNITE TO DEFEND EDUCATION

**Tue 22 Feb
Assemble 12.30pm
Tavistock Square, WC1,
depart 1.30pm for a
march to a rally at Bank**

100 percent of workers' wages if they refuse to reschedule teaching missed on strike dates. Other bosses have also threatened workers with 25, 50 and 100 percent pay deductions.

Rohan, an international relations lecturer, told Socialist Worker the move is an "assault on our right to organise and strike".

"It left me speechless when I heard that senior leadership plans to withhold our wages

until cancelled classes are rescheduled," he said.

The UCU branch last week overwhelmingly voted to confront the threat of pay deductions and to call an additional five days of strikes.

Solidarity boosted the UCU picket lines on Monday. At the University of Sheffield strikers were joined by Just Eat couriers who are battling pay cuts.

And in Newcastle members of the CWU communication workers' union and the FBU firefighters' union attended the strike rally.

Up to 300 strikers and supporters joined a rally outside the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow. There were large and lively pickets at Imperial College in London and Sussex university.

Students joined the picket lines at many universities. In Liverpool student Sky told Socialist Worker, "It's important that students show their support and come down to picket lines."

If the strike is successful, our quality of education will increase." The NUS student

union has called a Student Strike for Education on Wednesday 2 March.

It will demand "higher and further education to be funded by governments—free at the point of use for students—with proper pay, pensions and conditions for staff across education."

The UCU Left organisation, which Socialist Worker supports, said, "We face a simple choice."

"We either escalate to win, demand our union calls more national strike action for longer periods of time, making lesson rescheduling impossible in practice as in 2018 and 2020 or we leave members wide open to attack."

Every trade unionist, socialist and campaigner needs to build solidarity for the UCU strikes.

With Boris Johnson's government deep in crisis, they can become a focal point for resistance to the Tories and the cost of living crisis.

To see the days that universities are on strike go to bit.ly/UCUstrikes22